

## **UNDERSTANDING FAITH SERIES**

### **THE MUSTARD SEED FAITH**

We are seeking to understand the concept of faith from the bible. In Matthew chapter 17 we have a very familiar incident. Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration. And Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration. When He came down the bible tells us that He found a group of His disciples with a group of Pharisees and other people. They were trying to cast out a demon. And they did not succeed. And as He came down from the Mount of Transfiguration the father of this child that is demon possessed came to the Lord Jesus and knelt down before the Lord Jesus and said have mercy on me. This account is also found in Mark chapter 9 and the gospel of Luke chapter 9. The father begged Jesus and said Lord have mercy on me. He wanted results. Something is not working. Something was failing. And here Jesus when He saw it in Matthew 17:17 *And Jesus answered, "O faithless and perverse generation. He said it's a generation that does not have faith. What an indictment He made upon the generation. With all those people He says O faithless generation. Jesus Christ requires faith. And even though there were so many of them it did not work. It is not the more the merrier. It is to have faith its possible. All things are possible if you believe. Some times you can have the more and it does not make any difference. If you can only have one individual whether it is a child, if that child has faith it will work. Faith is the key. Apparently Jesus came down there was no faith at all. He says the whole situation that was happening there was no faith involved. And if you did not have faith nothing works. Without faith its impossible to please God Heb. 11 says. Then Jesus said *how long am I to be with you? Bring him here to me.**

The bible tells us in the gospel of Mark chapter 9 that just before Jesus says bring him here to me, Jesus said to the father. Jesus said if you believe all things are possible. And the father fell down before Jesus on his knees. He cried and he said I believe help my unbelief. I believe but help my unbelief. Look at Mark chapter 9 to the precise statement that he made. Verse 24 *Immediately the father of the child cried*

out and said, "I believe help my unbelief". How can that be possible? Believe and unbelief doesn't exist together. What is happening here is that the father was being convicted that he did not have faith. He had unbelief. And he was saying forgive my unbelief. That's the meaning. I know that some times people use that verse to say that you believe in the heart but there is doubt in the mind. Here the father must have believed to a certain extent otherwise he wouldn't have brought the boy to the disciples to have the demons cast out. If people bring them there must be a certain level of belief. But here there is a lot of unbelief. And Jesus emphasize on faith. Before Jesus could make an entrance into that situation there was like a blockade. Jesus had to minister faith. He took the father first and He said if you believe all things are possible. That statement of Jesus convicted him. He started crying out to God. While he was talking the rest started coming. Before the rest came Jesus rebuked the demon and the demon left the boy.

After that the disciples who were not very successful came to the Lord Jesus and said Lord, Master how is it that we cannot cast the demon out. How is it that you could and we couldn't? The first thing Jesus told them, lets go back to Matt. 17:19 *Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?"* Remember the paradox that they are going through. In Matthew 10 verse one Jesus gave them power over demons. Objectively they had the authority. Jesus gave them power and authority over demons. They had the authority on paper but it was not working in actual life. And a lot of Christians had a lot of privileges and authority and blessings on paper. The Word of God declares that in Christ they have all these blessings. They have it on paper but they don't have it in practice. Some times denominations are formed when the first generation had discovered a lot of spiritual things. The second generation or the third generation had it on paper. And they don't practice it any more. They lost the experience. They believe in it theologically but they don't practice it. Divine healing is believed in many denominations but its not practiced. The gifts of the Spirit are on paper in many denominations but its not practiced.

The disciples had the authority but its not working. And they asked Jesus, "Master why couldn't we cast the demon out?" Jesus said, "Because of your unbelief." That's the first thing He said. How come they have their unbelief in their lives? How is it that they have unbelief? There was doubt in them. Understand that a little leaven, leavens the whole lot. One doubt caused Peter to nearly drown while he walked in

the water. That's why we are studying on faith to see how that perfect love cast our fear and perfect faith have no fear. Now we see the situation the father didn't really have faith; the disciples didn't really have faith. So how can they make any connection with the power of God? Both the ministered and the minister have no faith. There is no power connection. Nothing resulted and the demon was laughing. There was no result, since unbelief was on both sides. No wonder Jesus came down and said this faithless generation. See the whole situation have no faith. That's where Jesus ministered to the disciples. Jesus gave them a solution. He says, "For assuredly I say to you if you have faith as a mustard seed you will say to this mountain move from here to there and it will move and nothing will be impossible to you if you have faith as a mustard seed".

And that's what we want to see this morning the mustard seed faith. The mustard seed is one of the smallest of all seeds. You don't need one ton of faith or three tons of faith. And I have examined that statement that Jesus made and asked whether He is trying use the analogy of a mustard seed in term of size. We know that is one of the usages for the illustration. A mustard seed represent the size of the faith that is necessary to do God's work and that is not much. A little bit of that will move a mountain. Just think what will happen if you have one gram of faith - the whole earth will shake.

The second reason for the analogy of a mustard seed faith is because the mustard seed represents something more than size. It represents a seed of life. Inside the mustard seed are the components and the genes for a tree. If we could take that mustard seed and examine the inward components of the genes in that mustard seed we could see a tree inside. In a sense we could say that it was a miniature tree. Jesus illustrated with that same mustard seed in another parable when He said that the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. When its planted it grows to a large tree and the birds find shelter in the tree. So we know that the mustard seed is not just a plant. It has a tree inside. But in the natural when you look at it there is nothing much just one dot. But in that dot are all the programs and all the genes that determine how tall and large that tree will become. What kind of fruit that it bears. In that tiny seed there is life. And it is that seed that is transportable, transferable and it can be planted. You try to transplant a mustard tree, you will find that it is not that easy. But you could do it through seeds. You and I started life as one tiny cell. Look at you now. You are now a huge grown up man or woman. You started

from one tiny cell. And from that one cell there are all the chromosomes 46 of them altogether. That tells what color of eyes you are to have. What color of hair you are to have. What color of skin you are to have and how tall you will be. All in that one tiny cell. The wonderful thing is that all these genetic programs are in every cell in your body. A seed you can call that.

Now with that background Jesus said faith as a mustard seed. We have always seen one picture of it and say its small like a mustard seed. But the other picture that Jesus is conveying Jesus does not use illustrations without reasons. I believe He chose that illustration of a mustard seed is He is trying to convey that faith is that tiny seed that is full of life. All the programs for the future are inside. And in that tiny seed if its planted properly it will produce, it has life. Faith has life as a mustard seed. All the time when we read the scripture we say faith is small as a mustard seed that's what we have. But Jesus is also saying that faith have life of a mustard seed. When you receive a word from God, a rhema from God. For example, God could have called you to be an evangelist to three nations. That call of God is given as a rhema to you. And that rhema comes and it is encapsulated in a seed. That seed is the Word of God. That Word is a capsule of God's plan and purposes, and is the spiritual engineering of your future. It looks insignificant. Sometimes you look at someone with a call for evangelism, from the outside you say I don't see any evangelism in you. You don't look for a picture of a tree in a mustard seed but its inside. Or you take a flower seed. Inside that seed is a plant. And that word that rhema the word has life. And that life starts as a seed. When God calls you He takes that seed and He plants it into your heart. He plants it into the fertile ground of your heart. As it enters into you, you nurture it. The first thing you realize is the call of God. Then as you move from time to time that seed grows in you. One day you began to see your faith laid a leaf. Something keeps coming up from you. And people say what's that coming up from you. It looks like a leaf of evangelism. You began to see your zeal for winning souls. You are burdened every time souls are mentioned. The leaves are coming out. And before long the branches start coming up from you. And you see that fellow now and it looks like he really has a call on his life. But many times people don't recognize it until they see the leaves. But those who are spiritually sensitive could see it even when it's a seed.

There is a difference between prophets and a minister of God who prophesize over you. Some time the body of Christ don't recognize the ministry in you yet. The

minister of God move in prophecy could detect it as a seed while others cannot detect. Do you know that the expert botanist could tell from a look at a seed what plant it is. You and I common people who are not experts in plants look at all the seed and they look the same. I remember one time I brought a seed to church and asked you what type of seed it is. You all couldn't tell. However an expert can tell the difference just by looking at the seed. And sometimes a man of God or a minister of God who carries a gift of prophetic confirmation in your life, they could detect it even when the body of Christ could not see it. And you yourself may not be aware that its there as a seed. Most of the time the body of Christ only starts recognizing your calling when the leaves and branches come out. Then they say now we see your call. Before that they persecute you like mad. So finally they recognized your call and then they see the flowers coming out. And they said its time we send you off. It takes time but faith starts life as a seed.

And Jesus illustrate that if you have faith as a seed you could do mighty things. That's the only way that God transfers the project of the future into our lives. For example, if God calls you to build a university that may cost one million dollars. How is God going to take that big thing and put it inside you? What He does is He encapsulates it in a seed form and puts it into you. We have seen in our study of faith that faith only comes when the Word makes an entrance into our hearts. Before that it is presumption or knowledge. It is only when faith enters into our spirits that faith is born. It may take the Word some time to enter into our spirit. The first time you hear the Word it may be just knowledge. The second time you hear it, it gets deeper in you and it makes a striking impression. The third time you hear that same Word it gets into you and you know that something have been birthed. So it may not be the first time it gets into you that it gets into your spirit. For some reasons some things in the Word take once to enter. But other things in the Word may take ninety nine times before it enters into our spirit.

The reasons for the differences have to do with our personality, our make up and our background. Some times you have been brought up in certain situations where mentally you were geared against the Word in certain area. So for the Word to make a penetration into your life in those areas may take longer. But in other areas you were not mentally geared against the Word and the first time you hears it you receive it. Let me give an illustration: sometimes people are geared and mentally trained against the work of the Holy Spirit, especially intellectuals. And when they

hear any teaching on the gifts of the Spirit or the baptism of the Holy Spirit or tongues, straight away they turn it off. They were mentally geared against it. They may hear it many times or they may even read many books but they turn it off. But another person reads it the first time receive it, got baptized in the Spirit, starts talking in tongues. So there are certain areas where this person is geared against the Word. And it may take the Word many times to penetrate the thick skull that has developed against it. On the other hand this person may not be opened to the Word on certain principles of the law of finances. But he is tongue talking, bible carrying demon casting, bible carrying, hand laying Christian. This guy his life is very disciplined. He has part of the success life built in him without realizing that the Word of God has relation to that. So we have here that this person gets into the Word lets say the laws of finances. This person gets it straight away. But this other person who is hand laying, demon casting, bible carrying Christian says the laws of finances are too worldly for me. See he is mentally geared against it. Because of our personality, our backgrounds sometimes sub-consciously we have been geared against certain things in the Word. And each of us are different in many different aspects because we come from different backgrounds.

And the same word will take different length of time to make an entrance into our lives. Jesus said the word faith is like a mustard seed. It must be planted. Do you know that a mustard seed can be planted on the carpet and nothing happens? You take the mustard seed and put it on a stone and nothing happens. You need two forces to bring it together. It needs to touch fertile ground and there must be right conditions like water and light. Otherwise it remains dormant. Lets look at Jesus illustrating on the mustard seed in Luke chapter 17. And He is answering a question, which many disciples today still ask. Lk. 17:5 *The apostles said to the Lord, Increase our faith!*". They must have seen the faith of our Lord Jesus. They must have seen what a man of faith He was. He spoke to the fig tree and it died. He spoke to sickness and they leave. He spoke to demons and they obeyed. He spoke to the waves and they were calmed. Spoke to the winds and they stopped. Spoke His Word about the bread and it multiplied. There is something about the Word of Jesus and the faith that impressed them. And they said Lord increase our faith. We need more faith.

Notice here that a mustard seed is all that is needed. Then what is required is not more mustard seed but how to nurture that mustard seed into a bigger plant. Jesus

said all you need is a mustard seed. And all things shall be possible; nothing shall be impossible to you. When a mustard seed is planted correctly it multiplies. It may start life as one cell multiplies to two cells, to four cells. When the disciples said increase our faith, this is probably the picture they were looking at, and they expected a spoonful of mustard seed to fall into them. But Jesus' answer to them was obvious. Jesus' answer illustrates what we are bringing forth here. They don't need a spoonful of mustard seed. They need to learn to develop that one mustard seed into a plant. That one seed will multiply and fill their lives.

Lets look at Jesus answer in Lk. 17:6 *If you had faith as a grain of mustard see, you could say this sycamore tree "Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea and it would obey you."* They said increase our faith. Jesus said one mustard seed is enough. See the contrast between Jesus' understanding of faith and their understanding.

Lets read on verses 7-10 *"Will any one of you, who had a servant plowing or keeping sheep, say to him when he has come in from the field, "Come at once and sit down at table? Will he not rather say to him, "Prepare supper for me, and gird yourself and serve me, till I eat and drink; and afterward you shall eat and drink?" Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty?"*

When I first read this passage as a young Christian I didn't understand the relationship of what He was trying to answer. In fact I didn't understand His answer. What is the relationship? They said increase our faith and He was talking about a servant and a master commanding a servant to do all kind of things. There is a two-fold relationship that relate to the mustard seed.

No. 1 He emphasizes servanthood. He compares those who have received faith and who are operating in faith to a servant. He says that like a servant who is commanded to do all kind of things you just obey, simply obey, just obey.

Secondly He emphasizes on the commands that have been given to the servant.

After the servant has performed the commands, the servant just says, "We are unworthy servant we just did what was told to us." There are two emphases here. One is servanthood and second is the commandment. And both of these relate to the picture of a mustard seed. They don't need more mustard seeds. They need to learn to take that one mustard seed and allow it to grow. They need to learn how like a servant who obeys the commandment of the master and not have more masters.

The mustard seed that is placed in you represents two things. It represents the control that will be taken over your life if you obey that. Second it represents the commands of the Lord. Jesus illustrates both. Let me illustrate in this way. See you are what you are because of the genes that have been programmed in you. You can't help it if you are slightly darker or slightly paler. You can't help it if your hair is black. You can't help it if the color of your eyes is black. There is a program that has gone into you. In fact your whole body system is a result of the genetic programming there. The only area that can be rectified is this. Prayer can cancel those genes that are damaged by a curse. Otherwise you can pray all your life for your hair to turn blonde and you won't get it. It may be faster to just go and dye it. Your whole physical system is enslaved to that genetic program in you.

And in the same way when the mustard seed has entered into your hearts, at first you have the vision. But later on the vision have you. What God is saying is when that vision that took control of you began as a seed. The soil welcomes and receives the seed and let that seed become the program for your life. When you get into the obedience of God you live only for God. I live only for the Lord and the ministry. I lost all the desire for the things of this life. I lost all my desire for fame; I lost all my desire for riches. I only desire to obey God and be perfect in His will. You lose all these things as you obey God. I remember when I first welcome Him into my life. I was eighteen when the Lord called me. I had two goals in my life at that time. One was to be rich and one was to be famous. I want to be rich and I was looking for a career as an accountant. The second goal that I had was I wanted to be the first Asian Grandmaster. I am good a chess if I am in top form I am unbeatable. But when the Lord came into my life, I was a Christian at that time but not born again. But when the Lord calls me in one of the early morning prayers, the Lord challenged me and asked, "What are you doing with your life? You are living for temporal things." And He asked me to come forth and live for eternity. And I gave

my earthly ambitions up and God's ambition has been the consuming desire. I have become in a sense a slave to the call of God.

Doesn't that sound familiar like Paul says as he wrote the epistles? He says Paul as an apostle and a slave of God. We become in a sense freewill slaves of God. We voluntarily surrender our wills and our lives. And incidentally you are either a slave to the world, to the devil or to the Lord. There is no middle point. If you are not a slave to God you are a slave to some thing. And I chose the Lord because only the Lord gives the best liberty. Look at the book of Romans; it emphasizes; that either you are a slave to sin and unrighteousness or you are a slave to God in righteousness. So when the seed of God enters into your life you literally become a slave. You yield yourself to the programming of God in your life and it guides you. That's the first illustration that Jesus gave when He talk about the disciples increasing our faith. Like a mustard seed, the Word of God commands, faith takes a hold of you. The blueprint the vision of your life takes hold of you. You become enslaved to the will of God. You are a voluntary and happy slave of God.

Secondly the illustration speaks about the commandment of God. In the concept of faith the command is important. If there is no commandment that has entered into you there is no entrance of faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word. If the Word has not come into you there is no faith. Only the Word produces faith. Having seen that illustration of a mustard seed, lets now move on into Luke 8 where it says if that is so then the main key to increasing our faith is learning to be a fertile ground. The main key to letting God do what He wants in our lives is learning how to be a fertile ground.

*Lk. 9:11-15 Now the parable is this. The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes the word from their hearts that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.*

All the four types of ground received the same Word. You can't say that the last ground was a more powerful resource. Do you notice that in all the four ground it was the same seed? So whether you produce fruit in your life or you don't produce fruit in your life, whether you grow as a Christian or you don't grow as a Christian and whether you increase your faith or you don't increase your faith does not have to do with God because He gives to all without respect. He gives His Word to all. He gives His leading to all. He gives His Spirit to all. He gives His salvation to all. All the ground received the same Word. The problem was not with the Word. The problem was with the ground. You can't blame God for the circumstances of your life. You can't say God why are you blessing that person and not me. The Word tells us it has nothing to do with God. It has to do with the type of ground. You can't say Lord why is that person growing from faith to faith and I am still stagnant here. Don't blame God don blame the person. Look in the mirror and that is the one to blame. The Word is the same. The ground is different. I would say that what I am today is the result of meditation on the Word. If any minister would take the same Word and meditate on it seriously, give time to it and in 4 or 5 years time you would have the same solid foundation on the Word. It would change your mind, change your thinking, and renew your perception of things, and all this come the word the same word.

But different ground makes a difference. So increase our faith, how. Learn to be in the right ground. And here is where the key is. Lk. 8:18 *Take heed then how you hear; for to him who has will more be given, and from him who has not. even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.* Did you notice Jesus didn't say take heed what you hear. But He says take heed how you hear. There is a difference between what and how. Now the *what* is also important. If you hear worldly junk, you will be come a worldly junkie. So in the same way what we hear is important. But there must be a combination. What you hear determines the quantity of substance you hear. For example if you spend more time in the Word you have more quantity time with the Word. If you spend only about two hours a day in the Word of God, what do you do with the rest of your free time? You would be spending time in the things of the world. Quantity wise you are spending more time on the world.

But Jesus emphasizes the quality of the time. How you hear. For example you could

be hearing the Word while you are doing something. Or you could be hearing the Word and seriously looking in the Word. See how your hearing is different. We need more of the quality time and the quantity time. Let me illustrate: if for example you take two hours for the Word and you spend two hours for the Word but you are half-hearted Christian. You do it because you have to. But you still do it. And having done it you go and do all the other things you wanted to do. But because of the amount of the Word how you hear, out of the two hours fifteen minutes of it got straight into you. Another person concentrates on the Word of God. When he hears how to obey and submissive to the Word he spends half an hour. But out of that half hour all the half hour he absorbed everything. Although he spent half an hour and you spent two hours, he absorbed half an hour and you absorbed fifteen minutes. That's the relationship between quality and quantity. However if the absorption power is the same, if the quality is the same then the quantity makes a difference. If both have the same ability to absorb the Word then the quantity is going to make a difference.

The bible says we are in a race. Do you know whom you are racing against? Cannot be the devil for he is outside shooting darts at you. Who is in the race? All the Christians are. Why do we run? We are all trying to run to please the Lord and set our goal to be the number one Christian. Of the whole planet earth God saw Noah and dealt with him. Of the whole planet earth God saw Abraham. Of the whole planet earth God saw His people He dealt with them. David Brainerd wrote in one of his prayer diaries that he made it a goal to be the man who is closest to God in his generation. Isn't it a nice goal? Of all the billions of Christian you make it your goal that when God looks down and say that one is closest to Me. Closest in terms of dedication and consecration.

The key that Jesus emphasizes what type of ground we are is how we hear. And what determines how we hear. That's where we cross reference to Hebrews chapter 5 verse eleven *About this we have much to say which is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.* Its possible to have our hearing affected so that how we hear is affected. So lets find out what really causes how we hear. Matt. 13:15 *For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for me to heal them.* Jesus is saying that there are people in His time that hears His teaching but never get it. They heard but spiritually they

did not hear. They hear only Jesus telling but it did not enter into them. How they hear was affected by the condition of their heart. And that's what we want to see here. How do we become the fertile ground? By the condition of our hearts. Sometimes your heart is not conditioned to the Word. The condition of your heart determines the absorption power in the Word. The problem is how do we bring the condition in our heart to a hundred percent absorption power.

I give you a few keys to do it. One is worship. When you wake up in the morning you find you cannot absorb yet. Your mind got too many things on. Worship the Lord and your heart is conditioned. You read the Word. Or when you pray in tongues. Look at Jude verse 20 *But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit.* That is not saying that faith comes by praying in tongues. Praying in tongues doesn't build faith. It builds yourself. What he is saying here is that when you pray in tongues much it waters the ground and make the absorption qualitatively better and make the condition in our hearts better. And of course if there is sin in our heart it prevents the Word from being absorbed. So we see this morning that how much faith we have, how to increase in faith, how to let that mustard seed grow depends on very much of what you do in our heart. Do you have a lot of other things filling your heart? If you have unforgiveness, bitterness, grudges, if they take room there is less room for the Word and faith to grow. We all know that when you plant a plant, it will grow according to the room you give. You plant it in a pot it can grow to a certain height and no more. But if you plant it on a free lot it will grow to the fullness of its genetic program. So how much room do you give for the mustard seed in your heart. We need to love Him with all our heart, mind and strength. And He says in Mk. 11:24 that when you pray believe that you received and you shall have them. But verse 25 says when you pray forgive. If there are other things that fill the heart it prevents the seed from growing. Take care of your heart. Don't give your heart to anybody but Jesus. It belongs to Him, surrender your heart to Him, worship Him, and pray in tongues to build yourself in the word, in prayer. And the absorption power in the Word is greater. Then can your faith increase and grow in you.

