

# WHEN WE DOUBT

**“And Jesus said to him, ‘If I can? All things are possible to him who believes’. Immediately the boy’s father cried out and said, ‘I do believe. Help my unbelief!’ Mark 9:23-24**

Do you ever doubt? It is hard to admit this, because we want our faith to be strong, not weak. We want our names to be listed amongst the heroes of faith and not be remembered as doubting or denying, as two of Jesus’s very own disciples did. We want to run the race and win it.

But God is God of mystery, infinite in all His ways, and not easily understood. We can believe in a God that created the heavens and parted the Red Sea, but we doubt that this same God is willing to step and intervene in our day to day lives in such a spectacular fashion.

Such was the father who brought his son to Jesus to be healed. The boy had a spirit within him which would cause him to have seizures and was often thrown into fire or water to attempt to destroy him. Can you imagine the discouragement and exhaustion of the father over the years, constantly on the alert for the safety of his son? There is a hopelessness there, defeat and doubt that their day to day lives will never change.

What I love about this story is that the father admits all of this to Jesus. He cries out, “I do believe. Help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:23-24) These two words are polar opposites.

“Believe” is the word “pistaeo: to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to credit, place confidence in.” “Unbelief” is the word “apistia: want of faith, weakness of faith.”

Back to back in the same breath: belief mixed with unbelief. The Amplified Version says it this way: “Lord, I believe. Constantly help my weakness of faith!”

This is such a beautiful example of the father bringing all his doubts and anguish to Jesus. He holds nothing back. Charles Spurgeon comments on this verse in this way:

*“Some unbelief lingered, though faith was supreme. Learn from this that a measure of doubt is consistent with saving faith; that weak faith is true faith, and a trembling faith will save the soul.”*

God never asks us for a mighty faith. Instead He asks us to place our weak faith in the palm of His hands and He will do the mighty deed through us and for us. Jesus only asks for our faith to be the size of a mustard seed. (Luke 17:6) It is noteworthy that a mustard seed is 1/16 of an inch in diameter—smaller than a poppy seed, a peppercorn, or a clove.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of our yourselves, it is a gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Ephesians 2: 8-9) Submitting our free will is the part we have to play in faith. But then even God takes what we think is ours and

- Gives us each a measure of faith (Romans 12:3)
- Increases our faith (Luke 17:5)
- Justifies our faith (Romans 5:1)
- Is the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2)

It is noteworthy that this desperate plea for help from the father was co-mingled with tremendous emotion here. It is the same word used when Christ cries out to His Heavenly Father while on the cross. I believe that the secret to our doubting is to bring them all to God and lay them at His feet. To plead with the Father to encourage us, strengthen us, and reveal to us His thoughts and His ways, which are not our thoughts or our ways. To turn our hearts towards Him, not away from Him.

The whole book of Habakkuk represents this questioning. Habakkuk is a prophet of God who trusts God and yet is questioning Him on some deep issues of life. How long will the Lord allow evil to continue in the land of Judah? And then, how can God possibly use an evil nation to bring judgement on the people of Israel?

This conversation with God is a wrestling. Habakkuk does not like the answers. But in the end, this dialog with God causes Habakkuk's faith to grow, not stumble and falter. Read the beautiful response Habakkuk writes at the end of the book:

*"Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." (Habakkuk 3:17-18)*

May we do the same today. Bring it all to Him and let your faith grow instead of falter.



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