

HOW TO GROW YOUR FAITH

by Andy Manning

John 4:46-54

I. INTRODUCTION

1. When is the last time you were amazed? The last time you exclaimed, "That's amazing!" There were only two times that Jesus was amazed. Both times had to do with faith. In Mark 6, Jesus was amazed at the unbelief in His hometown of Nazareth. It says that there was so much unbelief there that He was unable to do a miracle, and He was amazed at their unbelief (Mk 6:5-6). The second time that Jesus was amazed is found in Luke 7. A Roman Centurion, a Gentile, asked Jesus to heal his servant who was sick. The Centurion said several things that revealed his great faith. He told Jesus that he was unworthy to have Jesus visit his home. This showed that He believed that Jesus was no mere man. As well, He was confident that all Jesus had to do was to say the word for his servant to be healed. He did not need to visit the servant, or meet the servant, or see the servant, or touch the servant, or pray for the servant. Just by saying the word, he would be healed. Luke 7:9 says, "Jesus heard this and was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, 'I tell you, I have not found so great a faith even in Israel.'" Jesus was amazed at belief and unbelief because faith is so important.
2. The Christian life can be summed up in one word: faith.
3. In fact, the Christian life is not possible without faith.
 - i. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. **Hebrews 11:6** "Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."
 - ii. With faith, nothing is impossible. **Mark 9:23** "Everything is possible for the one who believes."
4. Without faith you cannot please God, you cannot know God, you cannot love God, you cannot obey God, you cannot seek God, you cannot pray, you cannot serve, you cannot love, you cannot be generous, you cannot endure difficulties, you cannot put up with difficult people.
5. With faith you can overcome any obstacle; you can scale any wall; you can move any mountain; you can resist any temptation; you can endure any hardship; you can wait for any amount of time; you can finish any race.
6. **J. C. Ryle** "In walking with God, a person will only go as far as he believes, and no further. His life will always be in proportion to his faith. His peace, patience, courage, and works will all be according to his faith."
7. **J. C. Ryle** "Faith is the root of a real Christian's character. If your root is right, your fruit will soon abound. Your spiritual prosperity will always be according to your faith. He who believes will not only be saved, but will never thirst. He will overcome,

he will be established, he will walk firmly on the waters of this world, and he will do great works.”

8. Faith is so vital that the worst sin is unbelief. **Thomas Watson** had much to say about this: “Unbelief is worse than any other sin, because it brings God, his Word, and his promises into suspicion. It robs him of the richest jewel in his crown, which is his truth: “He who believes not God, has made him a liar” (1 John 5:10).”
9. **Thomas Watson** called faith the “king of the graces.” He wrote, “Faith and love are the two hinges on which all true religion turns.” He said, “Satan strikes most at our faith, and would weaken and destroy it, because it has a great influence upon all the other graces and sets them to work.”
10. Let’s learn how to grow our faith.

I. TEXT: John 4:46-54

46 He went again to Cana of Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. There was a certain royal official whose son was ill at Capernaum. 47 When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea into Galilee, he went to him and pleaded with him to come down and heal his son, since he was about to die.

48 Jesus told him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe.”

49 “Sir,” the official said to him, “come down before my boy dies.”

50 “Go,” Jesus told him, “your son will live.” The man believed what Jesus said to him and departed.

51 While he was still going down, his servants met him saying that his boy was alive.

52 He asked them at what time he got better. “Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him,” they answered. 53 The father realized this was the very hour at which Jesus had told him, “Your son will live.” So he himself believed, along with his whole household.

54 Now this was also the second sign Jesus performed after he came from Judea to Galilee.

II. OBSERVATIONS

1. You can’t escape problems.
 - i. This man was a royal official. He served royalty. He had money. He had power. He had influence. Yet none of that saved him from the reality of problems – his son was deathly ill.
 - ii. In life you cannot escape problems. It doesn’t matter how rich you are, who you know, how powerful you are, how famous you are, or what you have, you cannot escape problems. You have to go through problems.
 - iii. Did this man have problems because he lacked faith? No. Faith does is not the cure for problems. Faith is not the antidote to problems. Faith is not insulation from problems.
 - iv. **John 16:33** “I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.”

- v. You have to learn to handle problems.
 - vi. You can handle your problems, or your problems will handle you. That depends on your faith.
 - vii. The royal official had just enough faith to handle his problem. He had heard about Jesus the miracle worker, and he believed that Jesus could heal his son, so he took his problem to Jesus.
 - viii. Faith always drives you to God.
 - ix. If you have faith, then problems will drive you closer to God. If you lack faith, then problems will drive you away from God.
 - x. Problems are not caused by the absence of your faith; problems reveal the quality of your faith.
2. Some problems can only be solved by Jesus.
- i. The royal official had the ear of royalty. But with this problem, he needed the ear of Jesus.
 - ii. You will face problems in life that cannot be solved by money; they cannot be solved by education; they cannot be solved by experts; they cannot be solved by Google; they cannot be solved by friends in high places. You will have problems in life that only Jesus can handle.
 - iii. In life, it doesn't matter who you know if you don't know Jesus, because there are some problems that only He can solve.
 - iv. The most obvious example is the problem of death. Death is a universal human problem. It's the biggest of all problems. And it doesn't matter who or what you know, if you don't know Jesus then death will be a tragedy. When you die you will either go to heaven or hell. And there's only one thing that can save you from hell. Do you know Jesus?
3. Jesus called out the royal official's weak faith.
- i. Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.
 - 1. Jesus performed signs and wonders to prove that He was the Messiah, the Son of God (John 20:30-31).
 - 2. But He expected faith without signs and wonders (John 4:48).
 - 3. He criticized those who needed signs and wonders (John 4:48).
 - 4. He condemned those who demanded signs and wonders (Mt 12:39; Mt 16:4; Mk 8:12).
 - 5. He pronounced greater judgment on those who ignored signs and wonders (Lk 10:13).
 - 6. He reserved special blessings for those who believed without signs and wonders (John 20:29).
 - ii. Other signs of weak faith:
 - 1. Fear and worry.
 - a. When Peter walked on the water to meet Jesus, he saw the strength of the wind and was afraid, and he began to sink.

Jesus said, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Mt 14:22-33.)

- b. When the disciples were in the boat with Jesus, they were terrified when a storm arose, but Jesus said, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?” (Mk 4:35-41.)
 - c. Fear and faith are opposites. More faith, less fear. Less faith, more fear.
2. Disobedience.
 - a. God commanded the Israelites to enter the Promised Land, but they disobeyed Him because they didn’t have faith that He would help them conquer their enemies (Numbers 13-14).
 - b. Every act of disobedience is a lapse of faith. Every time you disobey, you are saying, “God, I don’t believe your word.”
 - c. Faith is the foundation of obedience.
 - d. **Tony Evans** “The opposite of faith is not doubt. The opposite of faith is disobedience.”
 3. Prayerlessness.
 - a. When King Asa of Judah was attacked by Israel, instead of praying for God’s help he paid the king of Aram to help him. God punished Asa by sending war for the rest of his reign (2 Chron 16).
 - b. **J.C. Ryle** “What is prayer but faith speaking to God.”
 4. Stinginess – investing in this world rather than in heaven.
 - a. Tithing and generosity require faith that God is watching and will reward you.
 - b. When you lack faith, you will want
 5. Complaining rather than praising.
 - a. When the Israelites were traveling through the wilderness, every time they would hit hard times they would complain that God had failed them.
 - b. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were put in prison for serving God. How did they respond? At midnight they were praying and praising God.
 6. Depression rather than joy (Phil 4:4).
 - a. The letter of Philippians is called the letter of joy because Paul uses the word joy or “rejoice” so many times. Paul wrote over and over, “I rejoice about this; I rejoice about that.”
 - i. In Philippians 1:4 he is praying with joy.
 - ii. In Philippians 1:18 he is rejoicing that people are preaching the gospel, even though some are doing so with impure motives.

- iii. In Philippians 2:17 he rejoices that he gets to serve the Lord, even though he might not see any fruit from his labor.
 - iv. In Philippians 4:10 he rejoices that the Philippians sent him some financial assistance when they learned about his imprisonment in Rome.
 - v. As well, three times he commands the church in Philippi to rejoice (3:1; 4:4).
 - b. The remarkable thing about Paul's letter of joy is that he wrote it from prison.
 - c. **Chuck Swindoll** "Deep, contented joy comes from a place of complete security and confidence in God [faith] – even in the midst of trial."
- iii. This is the purpose of trials, by the way. Trials are faith tests.
 - 1. **James 1:2** "Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance."
 - 2. Your response to trials reveal your faith. Do you respond to problems with fear and worry, disobedience, prayerless, stinginess, complaining, depression? That shows that your faith is small; it needs to grow.
- iv. Would Jesus call out your weak faith, or would He commend your strong faith?

III. HOW TO GROW YOUR FAITH

1. Faith grows through obedience.
 - i. Jesus told the royal official that his son would live, and commanded him to go back home. John 4:50
 - ii. The royal official believed Jesus and departed. He obeyed Jesus. John 4:50
 - iii. When the man saw the proof that Jesus healed his son, he believed in Jesus as the Son of God. His faith grew from believing that Jesus healed his son, to believing that Jesus was the Son of God.
2. The only way to grow your faith is to obey God's word. When you obey, God will prove Himself true, and then your faith will grow stronger.
3. What is faith?
 - i. **Mark Twain** "Faith is believing what you know ain't so." That's not faith.
 - ii. Faith but trusting God enough to act on His word. When you act on God's word, He will prove Himself faithful, and your faith will grow.
4. Let me give you another example of this. 2 Kings 5. Naaman was the commander of the Aramean army, and he had a skin disease. His servant girl told him about the prophet Elisha in Israel. So Naaman went to Elisha to ask for healing, and Elisha gave him very clear, simple instructions – dip yourself in the Jordan River seven times. At

first Naaman refused; he thought it was a ridiculous idea. However, his servants persuaded him to give it a try. So Naaman acted on Elisha's instructions, dipping seven times in the Jordan, and instantly his skin was healed. Then Naaman's faith grew. He became a worshiper of the God of Israel. He told Elisha, "I know there's no God in the world except in Israel." How did Naaman's faith grow? He acted on God's word, God proved Himself, and his faith grew.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. Does your faith need to grow?
2. What's the next step of obedience for you?
 - i.