



I DO BELIEVE; HELP MY UNBELIEF!

[Mark 9:21-24] Jesus took three of his closest disciples on a mountain to witness the Transfiguration where they saw Jesus in a way no one had before and His glory was revealed. When people have a mountaintop experience, sometimes everything where they were before is falling apart. Down the mountain, Jesus' other disciples are engaged in a debate with the scribe and there's a desperate father whose son is possessed. The father has seen Jesus and His disciples do miraculous things and he's desperate to experience this for himself. There are things we want to believe, but there are impediments in our lives to believe.

1. What things in your life make you desperately want to fully believe Jesus?

WE'RE WIRED TO BELIEVE IN SOMETHING THAT GROUNDS US

At the heart of everything going on, the father has a true desire to believe but recognizes that it's difficult for him. In our current world, it's difficult to discern truth. There are deep fakes until we don't know what to believe is real. Even a decade ago, we couldn't have imagined this degree of questioning what we see. News outlets tell us their competitors aren't telling us the truth. Every single social media platform allows anyone to say anything. Someone out there's got to be right...right? Knowing the truth is out there fuels the desire to believe. We're wired to want to believe in something that will ground us. The father in Mark wants to believe, but he's got some resistant barrier inside of him.

2. What kinds of things make it hard for you to fully believe in Jesus (even if you do believe)?

BARRIER TO BELIEF #1: INTELLECTUAL

Tim Keller explains three barriers to belief most of us have dealt with at some point preventing us from fully believing in Jesus. The first is intellectual. We're in our heads. We ask all the questions. These are the "why" people. It's got to make sense in your brain.

3. If you're a "why" person, what kinds of questions get in the way of your faith?

BARRIER TO BELIEF #2: PERSONAL

There's something that's transpired in your life or a friend's life or in your family. These barriers become deeply personal. You ask questions like, "Where was God when..." We feel this barrier strongly. Or, maybe you grew up in a Christian household and then grew to a certain age and the family fell apart or there was hypocrisy and the faith you borrowed from them isn't really mine so there was a personal disconnect.

4. If you're someone hurt by past circumstances, how has this made your faith walk more difficult?

BARRIER TO BELIEF #3: SOCIAL

You're looking for other fellow travelers in the faith. You're looking to align those who have gone through your barrier, but we buy into this idea that no one else has fully experienced your unique situation. This is a lie from the enemy to separate you from other people.

5. If you're someone feeling like no one gets your personal faith struggles, how has this made faith community harder for you?

IT'S OKAY TO HAVE DISBELIEF, BUT NOT OKAY TO SIT IN IT

Whichever of these barriers may have resulted in some disbelief or doubt, it's okay. It's okay to wrestle. But, we have to go back to the passage in Mark to embrace the father's prayer. He doesn't just sit in his unbelief but offers this prayer, "Help my unbelief!" It's okay to have unbelief, but it's not okay to just sit in it. You need to journey through it, find out why it's there, and to circumnavigate it.

6. What can you do to journey through and address your faith barriers?

THE RESURRECTION DEMOLISHES ALL OUR BARRIERS, GROUNDING OUR FAITH AND HELPING OUR UNBELIEF

Our belief is galvanized by the resurrection. If Jesus rose from the dead, we can believe everything else he said. The resurrection of Jesus is the lynchpin of everything else that we believe and breaks through barriers. If the Bible is reliable, we can't be indifferent to it. We have to either accept it or reject it. Our intellectual barriers are broken by coming to terms with this core concept. It brings hope and healing to our personal barriers. Our social barriers find comfort in navigating faith with a faith community of believers.

7. Have you fully wrestled with the question of the truth of the resurrection?

WHAT WE PLACE OUR BELIEF IN IS WHAT HOLDS OUR HOPE ALSO

The resurrection refocuses our vision on the person and work of Jesus. For the father in the story in Mark, it was Jesus Himself who broke down his barrier. In Mark 9:18, the father had asked the disciples to drive out his son's demons, but they couldn't do what he hoped they could do. It wasn't until he placed his faith in Jesus that something happened. One of the things we can subtly do that creates a faith barrier is when we put our faith more in the people around Jesus than we do in Jesus. It's important because what we believe in doesn't deliver, at a minimum we're disappointed, at worst in a state of despair. If we place our believe in something Jesus-like instead of Jesus, we're going to be let down. In some cases, this can be deep hurts from church people because church people aren't perfect! Some of us put our belief more in a church than we did in Jesus. The entire New Testament has a collection of letters about what the church was doing wrong. Or, maybe your belief has been solely in yourself. But, at the end of the day, you'll realize you don't have all the answers. This is why the Bible shows us so many imperfect people around the perfect Jesus. Only Jesus never disappoints.

8. What may have subtly worked its way into your faith that's not directly Jesus and threatens to create avoidable doubts?

HOPE IS WHAT YOU GRASP AND ANCHORS YOU; THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS RESTORES OUR BELIEF IN JESUS

[Ephesians 1:19-20] If your belief is that your personal situation is going to change, it might not. Does it change the goodness of God? Not at all, because belief is not about outcomes but about who you believe in. If the resurrection is true, the rest of what Jesus said and promised is dependable. Because Jesus rose from the dead, everything is different. All things are possible for those that believe.

9. Even those who believe have shadows of unbelief. What is your personalized prayer of "help my unbelief"?