

Connect360: Impossible

Mission

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- *Lesson 11 in the BaptistWay Press Connect360 unit “Miracles: The Transforming Power of Jesus” focuses on Matthew 17:14-21.*

After Jesus rebuked a demon and cured a boy, the disciples wanted to know why their effort failed. “Why could we not cast it out?” they asked. Jesus told them they failed because their little faith was weak, something that characterized the disciples throughout Matthew’s Gospel (see 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20).

This is a common way of saying the disciples had no faith. Of course, to take Jesus’ words about mustard seeds and mountains literally is absurd. Jesus was using vivid figures of speech to drive home the point he’s trying to make. Even the smallest amount of faith is enough to accomplish the impossible when the object of faith is worthy. A great amount of faith in a firefighter who can only lift 30 pounds is sure to result in disappointment.

The disciples had healed others. What happened this time around? Though an explanation for their lack of faith is not given, the question deserves reflection. Perhaps the disciples were intimidated because Jesus wasn’t with them. Just before this narrative, we read that Jesus was on the mountain with Peter, James and John. During that time, the remaining disciples were asked to heal the man’s son. Since Jesus wasn’t there, maybe they weren’t expecting anyone to come to them. Maybe they forgot they had the authority to heal. Maybe when faced with this kind of unexpected situation, they became afraid and uncertain. While we’ll likely never know the reason for the disciple’s faithlessness, it is worth reflecting on what might contribute to our lack of faith.

When looking at faith and moving mountains, two mistakes are evident. The first is settling for mole hills. That is, we refuse to face the mountains God calls us to mount. Faith is easy, if it's necessary at all, in the safety of certainty. Another mistake is choosing our own mountains, which will result in major disappointment.

Believe God and trust him with the outcomes

Jesus' teachings on having faith to do the impossible do not guarantee a Christian will have spiritual superpowers that will result in making anything happen. Instead, when God calls us to do the impossible, we must fully believe in God and trust him with the outcomes, which is why prayer is so essential to the Christian life.

When we pray, we must acknowledge that God is the Creator, and we are the created. He is all-powerful, and we are completely dependent upon him. Concerning the subject of prayer, Jesus' words in John 15 are relevant: "apart from me you can do nothing." A life of prayer helps to ensure we are abiding in him, that we are seeking his will and listening for his guidance and direction. When we know that we have prayerfully arrived at the foot of a God-ordained mountain, we can live the Christian life with immense faith, stable confidence and an enthusiastic spirit of expectation.

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