



**KING'S  
CHURCH**  
EDINBURGH

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# Imperfect Faith

Mark 9:14-29

In Mark's telling of this story, he brings out the humanity of the Dad asking for a miracle for his self-harming son. In response to Jesus saying "Anything is possible for the one who believes"- he responds "I do believe, help me in my unbelief".

Our lives are a remarkable mixture! We can feel competent in some areas like work or study and feel out of our depth in other vital areas like relationships and caring for others.

This sentence at the heart of this story shows us that faith in Jesus is often best described as a mixture.

## 1. God seems happy to work with inconsistent people.

The episode starts with an argument between the disciples. This wasn't unusual! They're a mixed bag. One disciple was a political nationalist, one was an employee of the Roman government. Some like Peter spoke without thinking. Others like Thomas wouldn't believe without seeing. Welcome to the church that Jesus is building. There are no perfect people. Yet Jesus never gives up on them.

## 2. Jesus calls deeper faith out of us.

*"You unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?" (v 19)*

Jesus is amazed at their lack of faith. In the gospels Jesus is amazed when he finds evidence of faith where he didn't expect it. He is also amazed when he finds no faith where he did expect it.

Why did he expect more of these disciples?

- Because he'd already given them what they needed. (6:7) They'd received authority and were already seeing God's power at work. Now they'd taken a step backwards. They'd let themselves get discouraged.
- Because they'd lost sight of the heartbreaking situation that needed God's intervention.

Deeper faith is called out in three ways:

1. **Prayer- lifestyle prayer.** We find more authority in God the more we abide in him
2. **Compassion.** Jesus ASKED a QUESTION. "How long has he been like this?". Hearing people's story softens our hearts and makes us long for God to move.
3. **Calling it out.** Hebrews 3 says "*See to it that no-one has an unbelieving heart*". Jesus is calling out unbelief, in order that they may grow in faith. As believers we have a responsibility to do that for one another.

### 3. Faith sees the greatness of God.

*"Everything is possible for one who believes."* In Mark 11 Jesus says mountains can be moved for the one who puts their faith in God.

He's teaching the staggering nature of the relationship of the all-powerful God to human beings who trust him. God can do anything. And he will do anything for those who ask in faith.

Some caveats as to why God may not answer:

- Our motive may be wrong.
- It may not be God's will.
- Waiting, not immediate results is often an important part of faith.
- The Kingdom of God hasn't yet fully come, so we will always see a mixture of answered prayer and disappointment.

### 4. Moving in faith is always resisted.

Teachers of the law are arguing with them (v14).

There will always be battles we need to win to move in faith. Arguments in our minds that we need to ignore. Or pressures from others that we need to push through.

## How can I get more faith?

Faith is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). The prayer “*I believe, help me in my unbelief*” is a cry of help to a God who loves to answer that prayer.

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## Questions:

- **Authenticity.** Why is the Dad’s honesty such an important thing for us to learn from? How does this affect our relationship a) with God b) with one another?
- **Authentic, yet hearing the call to change.** Following Jesus requires us to be authentic, yet also to be called out and encouraged/instructed to trust God more. Which of these do we find easier. Which is more the culture of King’s and our small group?
- **Growing in compassion.** Jesus asked questions. What stops us wanting to go deeper with people. What dangers do we face if we don’t take time?
- **Bigger view of God.** How do you fuel your view that God really can do anything?
- **Trusting through disappointments.** What things help us keep trusting God when our prayers seem unanswered?
- **Overcoming resistance.** What personal challenges do you usually face when making decisions to move in faith?



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