

Trusting God with Our Biggest Problems

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- [0 : 0 0] Faith is central to Christianity. Faith is central to Christianity. Luther said it's the doctrine by which the church stands or falls.
- Faith is the key to following Jesus, and the Gospel of Matthew is all about discipleship, people following Jesus. And yet the problem with faith is it's so often misunderstood.
- Many Christians struggle to believe that they have enough faith, often overcome with doubt and fear, and especially when we're faced with sort of life-challenging situations like we have in the people in our story today.
- One of the difficulties is that faith has so many different meanings. Faith could be a name. So someone asks you if you've found faith. We could say, no, she's gone home with the Alcanears, and we'd have to find her later.
- But all too often, faith is used as something of a leap in the dark in the modern world, away from facts and away from reality and towards myth and fantasy.
- [1 : 0 5] I believe in science, someone might say. You just believe in faith. We often see this in the movies, especially at Christmastime. Faith is often just wishful thinking.
- Some of the taglines of the movies that you'll see, those classic Hallmark movies, is just believe and everything will be right. Just believe and everything will be alright.
- But no one tells you what to believe in or why that's going to work. And the Bible corrects all this bad thinking and tells us that the only thing that makes faith work is to come to the person, to come to Jesus.
- The only thing that makes faith work is the person and work of Jesus Christ. And to do that, you've got to come to Him with your problems and all, just like the people in the story today.
- So today we're going to look at what's going to help us in our weak faith. If you think you don't have enough faith, then you want to listen up today because we're going to look at two things that's going to help us get the kind of biblical faith that Jesus wants us to have.
- [2 : 1 9] The first thing we're going to do, we're going to see, is that we've got to go to Jesus with our problems and all. And so the first thing you need to do with any issue that you have in your life, any problem, is to go to Jesus, excuse me, to go to Jesus.
- No matter who you are, whether you're high born or low born, we've got those two figures in the story today, no matter what the problem is, and these people are facing death and dying, and no matter how long you've been struggling with it.
- And the woman has been struggling with her disease for over 12 years or for 12 years. And so Jesus wants you to come to Him personally and deal with Him one on one. And what's more, it doesn't matter how you come to Him, just as long as you do.
- So let's have a look at the people that come to Jesus for help and how they come to Him. First of all, you've got this, I'm just going to call Him a high born yet humble leader.
- A high born yet humble leader. So verse 18, while Jesus was busy talking, a ruler came and knelt before Him and said, my daughter has just died.

[3 : 32] But come, put your hand on her and she will live. Matthew says that this person's a ruler. The other gospels tell us his name, Jairus.

And he's the ruler of the synagogue in Capernaum, probably where they were at this time, the big city in the northern part of Israel. It's the capital of that area. So this is a public, high profile figure.

You mustn't think he's the same as a minister of a church. In those days, the ruler of the synagogue would have ruled over that entire city. He's the mayor, he's the leader, he's really the king of that city. And how does he come to Jesus?

Well, it looks like he's got, he's full of faith. Just comes boldly, walks straight up to Jesus. Doesn't even sound like he's asking Him. More like an order. My daughter has just died, but come, put your hand on her and she will live.

And yet, for all his leadership, he still humbles himself. Yes, he comes boldly to Jesus, but he gives Jesus the greatest respect that a person can do.

[4 : 42] He kneels down before Him. If you notice in that first verse, while Jesus is talking, a ruler came and knelt before Him.

We don't often see rulers doing that in the modern day. But he's bowing down and kissing Jesus' feet. In fact, that word, kneel before Him, depending on your translation, might say, bow down before Him.

It might say, worship Him. It's the same word often used of worship, but it's that aspect of bowing down, humbling yourself, and kissing someone's feet.

Now, if this was the only person in the story that Matthew gave us, we'd think that the message would be that we as believers have to have the same level of faith if we're going to get anything from Jesus.

Come boldly, doesn't matter who you are, humble yourself and just tell Jesus what you want and Jesus will deliver it for you. But what you do is you've got to come boldly.

[5 : 39] Boom, boom, bang, and the problem is solved. A little later on in the story, Jesus immediately goes off and helps the man. But this passage is carefully constructed so that the focus is actually on the one who has, well, in a sense, a bigger problem coming to Jesus.

It looks like she's got a smaller problem. This guy's daughter is dead. But the focus is on the woman with the flow of blood. She's in the middle of the story. I don't know if you saw how the story runs where the guy comes to Jesus, the ruler comes to Jesus, asks him for help, and then as Jesus is on his way, there's this little story in the middle about the woman with the flow of blood.

And then the story that the ruler's daughter is healed. And so the focus is on that center bit on the woman with the flow of blood. And you've got someone who's lowly and who's really an outcast but who's still expectant.

This is a lonely and very broken woman. The cleanliness laws in Israel at the time would have meant she had to avoid all human contact. She would have had to avoid all human contact for the period that she was bleeding.

Twelve years. No human contact. No community events. Totally alone. No hugs. No fraternizing.

[7 : 06] No meals. And notice how she comes to Jesus. Full of fear. Full of trepidation. Full of doubt. She doesn't confront. She doesn't come in front of Jesus.

She comes from behind and just quietly wants to grab onto the tassels of his the hem or the tassels of his cloak. She's very low and just Jesus is walking past and she just just want to just want to touch.

She doesn't want to be noticed. Just wants the smallest touch of healing. Well we learn from this is what Matthew is saying is listen when people have got problems.

When you've got problems you need to go to Jesus no matter who you are. You need to go to Jesus no matter what the problem is. You need to go to Jesus no matter how long you've struggled with the problem.

These are people that bring their brokenness and desperation with them. They don't have it all in place. They don't pretend. They're brutally honest about their situation. They realize they're helpless.

[8 : 12] They realize they're hopeless. and that the only hope is Jesus and we need to do the same with the issues in our life. You know the ruler had to humble himself and sad to say some people are just too arrogant too proud.

They're too much in control of their lives. They've got all the resources. They think they can manage any problem and then disaster strikes. and you realize just how helpless you are.

All your money all your influence means nothing. And so friends don't be too proud to take your biggest problems to Jesus. It's only when you come to him humbly and meekly yes with confidence you can ask directly for help but when you realize that you're coming to someone whose authority and abilities far outweigh yours that you'll begin to get Jesus life-giving and life-changing power in your life.

The woman needed to overcome her shame and her trepidation and maybe that's you with something in your life. Too often we let whatever our problem is stop us from coming to Jesus.

We feel unworthy. We feel unclean. Maybe it's something that we've done and we carry the problem with us and it could be a long time and we all know the longer you carry that problem by yourself before you bring it to Jesus or give it to someone else the bigger that problem gets doesn't it?

[9 : 48] We don't think anyone can fix it. What you need to know is that none of that matters to Jesus. He only wants one thing from you and that's you with all your problems.

and he wants you to come to him and trust him to do what only he can do to heal you inside and out. In fact this faith or trust is at the very heart of the story.

Notice what Jesus says to her when she comes to him. I'll just read actually from verse 20. As Jesus is on his way a woman who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak.

She said to herself if only I touch his cloak I'll be healed. Jesus turned and saw her and said take heart daughter your faith has healed you.

Depending on your translation your faith has made you well. It could even say your faith has saved you. The Greek word behind that word well or healed is often translated saved.

[11 : 15] And the woman was healed or indeed saved from that moment. And so friends the key that unlocks Jesus' life changing power is faith.

You've got to come to him but then trust him with his power and abilities to change your life. And here's the crux and central teaching of Christianity of just how Jesus wants us to relate to him.

Faith is the only way we can get access to the life changing power of Jesus. Take heart he says your faith has made you well. She probably has a little bit of a superstitious idea about just touching Jesus or just touching something about him and he doesn't want her to know that there's nothing magical about how he works.

Just trust me and I'll make a change in your life. Now the word translated faith here can just as easily be translated trust or believe.

When you read the New Testament and it talks about for example justification by faith or having faith you need to know that there's one Greek word but it's got multiple meanings. In effect though they all kind of mean the same thing.

[12 : 25] So anytime you see the word faith you can substitute it with the word believe or trust. It's probably better to translate it trust if you want to get that element of personal relationship.

And we can often overcomplicate just what faith is by getting a bit too theological sometimes. But a good dictionary definition will help us get our hand around what faith is all about.

So here's just a working definition. Faith is confidence in a person or a thing with reference to truthfulness or reliability. Faith is confidence in a person or a thing with reference to truthfulness or reliability.

So you have faith in something, you trust something or someone if they're truthful and if they're reliable. Now we all know how this works in everyday life.

You trust someone who does what they say they'll do. You believe someone when their words and actions match up with what they say consistently over time. The thing that makes faith work is not the subject of faith, the person having the faith, but the thing that that faith is in, the object of the faith.

[13 : 46] It's not the person doing the believing that's got the strength and the power that makes faith work. It depends on the person or the thing that they believe or trust in. For example, if someone needed a hundred rand and they came to ask me for it, you're not going to get it.

It's unlikely. I'm just using me as an example. You might get it. You come ask me for a hundred bucks, you need to go buy something at the shop and I say, yes, sure, I'll give you a hundred bucks.

You go to the shop, you collect all that stuff and then I don't pitch up. Now what's going to happen there? Now it doesn't matter that you've got lots and lots and lots of faith in me who doesn't pitch up.

Your amount of faith, your strength of faith, what you really, really, really, really believe means nothing unless I pitch up with a hundred bucks. Does that make sense? Okay?

You'd be far better to ask Helen for a hundred rand. Although sometimes you're not quite sure if Helen's going to give it. So you send the email, you go do the shopping and you go do the shopping.

[15 : 01] Now you must wait. Now I'm wondering, I really hope Helen's going to put the money in. She always puts the money in. So my doubt, my worry, my concern doesn't actually matter.

It doesn't stop. Helen from giving me the money. The only thing that will stop Helen from giving me the money is if you guys don't give Helen the money. But conversation for another day.

Faith works, even if one can doubt, depending on the reliability of the person that you're putting it in. Does that make sense? Yeah. God's love. That's why we can trust Jesus.

Because he's the most trustworthy person that has ever lived. When you read about Jesus in the Gospels, they show us a person who never lies, who never over promises, who never under delivers, who never manipulates, never tries to gain the upper hand, but instead does everything, all the time, to serve everyone that comes to him and asks for help.

That's the picture of Jesus in the Gospels. That's who he is. And in fact, in our passage today, Jesus gives us reason to have even more confidence, total confidence, as to why we know we can trust him, even with our biggest problems.

[16 : 31] And if we do that, we will experience his life-changing power. Have a look at verse 24, at the kind of thing that Jesus can actually do. The story continues, I'll start at verse 23, Jesus is on his way to the ruler's house, his girl is dead, and Jesus sees the flute players and the noisy crowd.

He says, go away. The girl is not dead, but asleep. And they laughed at him. It kind of makes sense, I mean, we had a funeral here recently, yesterday.

And you just don't go to funerals and say, oh, don't worry, just give me a moment and then raise the person back to life. It's just not doable. You can't do it. None of us can do it.

Here is a man that can. He walks in, he chases the mourners away, after the crowd had been put outside, he went in, took the girl by the hand and she got up.

How's that? It's an incredible miracle. It's incredible power. It's next level power. Nothing Jesus has done can compare to this.

[17 : 54] This is the biggest miracle of all the miracles that we've read about in Matthew that he's done. because overcoming death is you need the most amount of power to do that.

What that means is that Jesus has the power to deal with whatever problem you need help with in your life. Jesus literally has the power over life and death. And then just look at the way that he treats the woman.

You know, Jesus is off with the ruler. He's asked him for help. He's asked him for like a really big miracle. I'm going to go raise the dead. And here's this woman who shouldn't be touching anyone, outcast, poor, destitute by now.

How does she, who's helping her? No one. And if Jesus was like any other guy in the world, he would be like, hey man, I'm just going to go help this guy because he's the ruler.

I know, I'm going to get recognized if I go with the ruler. Everyone knows it and I'm going to go with the ruler now. And he doesn't do that. He stops. He doesn't brush her off.

[19 : 07] He doesn't continue with the ruler. He stops and he turns. He turns towards her. And he takes time to help the lowliest, least deserving person there is.

And not only that, Jesus sees her faith, recognizes her faith, and tells her not to have any fear. Take heart, he says, daughter.

What a lovely address that Jesus has got towards people that he cares for. Your faith has healed you. He doesn't see her fear.

He doesn't care about her trepidation. He doesn't worry about her doubt. None of that gets in the way of him telling her, no, but you've got faith. The other stuff doesn't matter to him.

Jesus doesn't need strong faith. He doesn't need confident faith. He just needs any kind of faith. And he's happy to work with that and pour his power into that person's life.

[20 : 08] I don't know about you, but I find that so encouraging. You know, we're all the women in this story. Most of us. At some point, we all feel that our faith is too weak.

not strong enough. We feel our problems are way too much for us to handle. And we're overcome by worry. So overcome by worry that it's difficult to trust that Jesus will help us.

Jesus' answer here is you need to take heart. Be encouraged. The faith you have is enough. He will do the saving.

faith doesn't do the saving. Faith unlocks the power of Jesus doing the saving. Jesus is saying, you may feel you have weak faith.

You may feel you have small faith. You may feel you have doubting faith. But at the end of each sentence is the word faith. That's all he needs.

[21 : 13] That's all he wants. Give that to him and leave the rest up to him how he decides how to deal with you, how to help you. He doesn't care that you've struggled for years and kept that problem unsolved.

He doesn't care that you feel clean and unworthy. That's not a problem for him. None of that matters to him. What matters is that you come to him and trust him with your problem so that he can heal it and save you from it.

Now, you may have noticed, I'm skirting over the issue of the fact that he's healed these people.

So what exactly are we trusting Jesus for? Is it for healing? Is it for material gain? What are we supposed to be trusting Jesus for? What does it mean if I'm not healed now?

And there's people in our church dealing with this. Now, the best person to answer this is a well-known Christian, Christian writer and personality called Johnny Erickson Todder.

[22 : 20] The older generation might know her. And she embodies what it means to trust Jesus for everything. And it's not, we don't normally do this, but I want us to watch a short video as she discusses this very thing.

And then I'll close for us. After I broke my neck in that diving accident back in 1967, I refused to believe that I would remain paralyzed. Doctors told me that I would never use my hands or legs.

But it didn't sink in. Every one of my prayers focused on walking again. To me, walking was a good thing. It was a good request to make of God. Jesus says so in Matthew chapter 7, verses 9 to 12, quote, if evil people know how to give good gifts, how much more will God give good gifts to those who ask him?

Oh boy, what could be better? What could be a better gift than walking, right? I did everything possible to walk again. I worked hard in physical therapy to get back on my feet.

I attended healing services and was the first one to wheel up front to receive my miracle. I strained mentally to kind of like make my fingers move.

[23 : 28] I straightened up my spiritual act and I began reading God's word more regularly. I prayed more earnestly thinking that surely God won't ignore the prayers of someone who's trying so hard to please him.

Well, you can imagine how disappointed I felt when years later my hands and my legs were still limp and useless. I thought, God, you say in Psalm 84 that you withhold no good thing from those whose walk is blameless.

So why are you withholding my healing? I just didn't understand. God promised to not withhold any good thing and to me, walking was a good thing.

But then, I'll never forget this one day, a friend said to me, Johnny, I want you to know that I think you're awfully courageous.

I mean, I've been looking at you and I don't know, your smile in that wheelchair. Oh, my goodness, it assures me that God is going to help me get through my problems.

[24 : 38] And I thank you for that. Wow, her comment about courage, it just hit me. It resonated. Something told me that this was God's good thing.

I realized God wasn't so much interested in healing my legs, but in healing my heart. God's always interested in our physical well-being, sure, but he is far more interested in our spiritual well-being.

He wants a deeper healing. Those good gifts spoken of in Matthew chapter 7, they include gifts of courage and endurance. The Lord wanted me to use my paralysis to cultivate perseverance and patience and most of all, a deep reliance on Jesus.

Man, that's the best thing that's going to last for all of eternity. And with that, I began to pray for a contented heart, settled thoughts, a mouth that refused to complain, eyes that refused to envy others, and ears that refused to listen to the devilish lie that often said to me, Johnny, you really would be better off dead than disabled.

In short, I began to accept God's idea of what's good, a beautiful, deeper kind of good, a great good. This said, I don't know, you might ask God for financial stability, but God may want you to keep leaning on and learning to trust him.

[26 : 12] You may desire to marry, but God may keep you single and dependent on his grace. You might ask for a clean medical report, but God just may want to give you courage to face the unknown.

And these are all good gifts. Over the decades, I've come to highly value things like bravery in the face of suffering, faith and perseverance, endurance, peace, peace that is profound, and joy that is unshakable.

Unlike our bodies, these wonderful qualities, you know what? They're going to, they're going to last for all of eternity. So I would not trade a Christ-like character for any amount of walking.

And I really would rather be in this wheelchair knowing Jesus as I do than to be on my feet knowing less of him. Now, this is not to say that God never miraculously heals, but when he does, I want you to take it as a sneak preview of that glorious day when every disease and every illness will be a thing of the past.

Every blind eye will be opened. Every deaf ear will hear. Miracles, and by the way, miracles really are the exception to the rule down here. Nevertheless, miracles should point us to the time when all people who are lame, like me, are going to leap for joy.

[27 : 35] Walking is a good thing, but a strong faith and happy dependence on God is so much better. Life is richer and far more satisfying when lived with a courageous trust in Jesus Christ.

In closing, I realize I have not covered all the questions that you may have about miraculous healing, but let me tell you, Johnny and Friends has great resources on the topic and a few of my own books in which I tackle the topic in depth.

And oh, I pray that no matter what your physical needs, you too will find contentment in the one who loves making a deeper healing in our heart.

I mean, that lady in her wheelchair, her faith is stronger than our bodies that are not in that wheelchair.

She's stronger on the inside than we are on the outside. That strength doesn't come from her. She's just like this woman in the story. All of that strength, all of the healing that she's had on the inside comes from Jesus because she's gone to him, poured her heart out to him, and received his life-changing power.

[28 : 58] So friends, don't give up on taking your problems to Jesus. The woman in our story, in Matthew, suffered for 12 years. She could have said, I've tried everything.

Why bother trying Jesus now? Instead, she said, I've tried everything. Now it's time to try Jesus. And Jesus never sends you away unchanged.

Unchanged. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we are so thankful for your mighty power, but also Lord, for your mighty love.

You don't expect us to come to you with all the answers, with everything intact, with all our ducks in a row, Lord. In fact, when we come to you with our fears, our anxieties, our trepidations, you don't even see that.

All you see is us coming to you with the smallest amount of faith. But for you, that's enough. Lord, we are so thankful that you don't chase anyone away that comes to you and asks you for help.

[30 : 07] Lord, be merciful and pour your life-changing and life-healing power and heal us, Lord, inside and out. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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