

How Much Faith is Enough
Digging Deeper
John Lohmar
Director of Life Groups



The Cocoon

Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Matthew 17:20 NIV

I have a dear friend named Glory who, along with her husband Dave and their two adult children Danny and Sarah, are family to me. I've known them for over forty years and they have been there for me through the darkest times of my life. A few weeks ago, Glory got one of those diagnoses we all dread - "You have a brain tumor". The shock and the fear were lessened somewhat by the prognosis that the tumor is likely benign. But as one of the family, I can tell you that waiting for the surgery date to roll around was hard. Praise God that the tumor was benign and Glory is expected to make a full recovery.

To help her with her recovery, Glory's husband and her two kids carefully arranged the pillows on her bed so she could sleep sitting up because her head cannot be below her heart while she heals. In this cocoon, as she calls it, she started her recovery as a caterpillar a few days ago and is now rising as a butterfly. The room where the cocoon thrives was also Danny and Sarah's nursery where they began their life as caterpillars and have now become butterflies. Sarah has named it The Healing Room.

In this room, Glory is surrounded by kind cards full of love and support from family and friends. She also has several small pieces of needlework that she has stitched over the years scattered around her that include some of her favorite words of encouragement. One says "Live in faith, not in fear". I'd been thinking about how I was going to start my summary of last Sunday's message on faith when I got a text from Glory telling me this story. When I read those

words about her faith, I said to myself, you know what, let's start with that.

Fear is something we all live with. It's just part of life, part of being human, part of living in an imperfect world with imperfect people. But whether we live in fear or not, whether we let it take over our life or overcome it, depends on how much faith we have.

Jesus said that even if our faith is as small as a mustard seed, that is enough (Matthew 17:20).

Because a little bit of faith in a great big God goes a long, long way.

Like the tree that grows from a tiny mustard seed, our faith throws a canopy over our life that protects us from the fear and doubt that rain down on us from time to time. The testing of that faith produces perseverance and maturity in the way we respond to crises. But without believing that God walks with us every step of the way through all of our trials and tribulations, our faith tends to be present only when things are going well and disappears when we stumble into the deepest, darkest valleys (James 1:2-8).

Faith is not about what we know, or what we think we can get through on our own. It's about who we believe in. It's good to know what faith is. Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1 NIV). But knowing that is not enough. It is

our belief and trust in God that gives us that confidence and assurance, even though we cannot see Him.

That's real faith. The kind of faith that won't go away when things get hard and are beyond what we can handle on our own.

Sometimes our faith is misplaced. We may have faith, for example, that we will be rich some day and soon discover that rich means something entirely different to God.

Sometimes our faith is confused. We may think that because we had faith we would be offered a certain job and weren't, God has forgotten or given up on us. **That is not true.** God has created each one of us to do something special, and sometimes it takes a while to figure out what that is (Ephesians 2:10).

And sometimes our faith is disappointed. We may have faith that a broken relationship will be restored, that healing will take place, or that a loved one will survive a serious illness. Then those things don't happen and our faith begins to waver. These moments are hard and they test our faith to its limits. But if we know and believe that God truly does love us, we will grieve, we will put our trust in Him, and eventually, we will come to understand that in those times, God had other plans. We may not know what those plans are, but the comfort of His presence in our life helps us move on.

When our faith intersects with the intention of God - when what we hope for is aligned with what He wants for our life in that moment - the kingdom of God comes into this world in all its power, even if our faith is as tiny as a mustard seed. Healing takes place, relationships are restored, and the kingdom of God spreads across the globe, bringing hope and assurance to all those who trust in Him.

Faith is transformative.

Faith is restorative.

Faith is all we have in the darkest moments of our life.

And though it may be no bigger than a mustard seed, it is more than enough.

Oh, and by the way, if you're one of those whose faith is in its infancy and you have trouble imagining a tiny mustard seed growing into a big tree because, you know, there aren't a lot of mustard trees around here, maybe these words of wisdom from Walt Disney will help.

“Don't be afraid of small beginnings. Remember, this whole thing started with a mouse.”

Reflect

A little bit of faith in a great big God goes a long, long way.

Pray

Heavenly Father, I put my faith and trust in you. Give me confidence in what I hope for and assurance in what I cannot see. Help me grow my faith into a shield that protects me from the arrows that fly by day and the terrors of the night. Walk by my side as I go through the storms of life and allow me to rest in the shadow of your wings until each disaster has passed. Fill my heart with joy over your presence in my life and let words of praise for all you have done for me flow from my mouth so that others may come to put their faith in you.

Amen

Discuss

How big is your faith?

- (a) It's just getting started and hasn't germinated yet.
- (b) It's sprouted but sometimes wilts in the heat of a crisis.
- (c) It's in full bloom and weathers any storm that comes my way.

One way to strengthen our faith is to spend time with people whose faith is stronger than ours. Who in your life has helped strengthen your faith?

What has been the biggest crisis in your life so far, and how did your faith hold up?