

WINTER 2025-26

YOU[®]

**LIMITED
RESOURCES,
LIMITLESS GOD**

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**SHARING
JESUS IN A
POST-CHRISTIAN
WORLD**





A BIBLE STUDY ON THE LIMITLESS POWER AND PROVISION OF GOD

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Friend, I wish I could help! But I have no time. I have no money. I have no plan. I'm just exhausted. My tank's empty. I don't think I'm your person. I'm not sure that's inside the parameters of our company policy. My calendar is slammed. I'm all out of those. I can't find what you need.

This chorus of universally common responses sounds familiar. We've heard them. We've said them. And sometimes they really are true. We live high-capacity lives, with low-capacity funds and dwindling time. Everywhere we turn we find overextended, underfunded people with limited margins, few guardrails, and contracted capabilities. Culture thrives on scarcity of time, money and ability.

But when confronted with the needs of a lost, weary world, you'll never find those excuses in the red-letter verses of your Bible. Jesus is truly an all-sufficient Savior who supplies everything we need. And He longs to show us how to escape the bounds of scarcity. We can learn His way and discover that little really does become much. Over the next six studies, let's discover His greatness when we have little to give.

SESSION 1

WHEN YOUR FAITH FALLS SHORT

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THE POINT:
A FAITH THAT LOOKS
TO JESUS IS A
POWERFUL FAITH.

MATTHEW 17:14-20

¹⁴ When they reached the crowd, a man approached and knelt down before him.

¹⁵ "Lord," he said, "have mercy on my son, because he has seizures and suffers terribly. He often falls into the fire and often into the water.

¹⁶ I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn't heal him."

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¹⁷ Jesus replied, "You unbelieving and perverse generation, how long will I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him here to me."

¹⁸ Then Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and from that moment the boy was healed.

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¹⁹ Then the disciples approached Jesus privately and said, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

²⁰ "Because of your little faith," he told them. **"For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."**

MEMORY VERSE

KEYWORDS

Lord (v. 15)—The father likely meant nothing more than to show respect for Jesus as a rabbi and someone who might heal his son.

Rebuked...Came out... Healed (v.18)—All indicate simultaneous action and not sequential results. Jesus rebuked the demon, it departed, and the

boy was immediately and permanently cured.

Little faith (v. 20)—The singular word translated as "little faith" appears only here in the New Testament. Jesus referred to the quality of their faith rather than the quantity of their faith demonstrated with the comparison which followed.

WHAT CAN BELIEVERS DO WHEN THEIR FAITH FALLS SHORT?

New believers and longtime believers alike have all likely experienced crises or chronic circumstances at one point or another, times when it looked like life was just “lifing.” Though we know faith is important, it’s frustrating when we just don’t have any answers. The voice inside our head whispers, Why? Why me, God? These tests, these challenges, at first glance, might challenge everything we know about God, faith, and prayer, but through all our emotions, thoughts, and missteps, we are not alone. We come to see that when we have nothing left to give and no one else to call, Jesus is just getting started.

Without Faith We Fail //

Matthew 17:14-16

Fresh off the divine encounter of the Transfiguration, where Moses and Elijah showed up in all of their glorious extravagance, Jesus encountered the worst of evil. There was glory on the mountain, but there was trouble in the valley. That’s the way life is. We can experience glory in one place and evil in another all in the same day. There can be excitement and victory in one place and trial and tribulation in another. Staying on the mountain would be amazing, but we can’t pitch our tents there when our community is in crisis. Jesus’ disciples understood this and ran to the aid of their community. When you engage this story, you’ll encounter the following seven elements:

1. **Desperation.** A father collapsed at the feet of Jesus. This was no time for foolishness. This man was at his wits end. The whole community knew that.
2. **Futility.** The disciples tried everything that had worked in the past and they came up short. They had no power over the boy.
3. **Confusion.** The people had dealt with demons before, but they wondered what made this situation so impossible. The witnesses had to be confused also. This didn’t fit the narrative that they had heard about Jesus disciples.

They thought they were miracle workers, but the men in front of them had no tricks up their sleeves.

4. **Repetition.** This was not a new thing. This craziness relentlessly kept showing up. Sometimes it happened near a fire, and other times, around bodies of water, but it just kept happening.
5. **Failure.** The disciples’ feelings of futility morphed into frustrating failure. They had to be thinking, What are we doing wrong? How



THE POINT: A FAITH THAT LOOKS TO JESUS IS A POWERFUL FAITH.

are these demons different than the ones we've expelled in the past?

6. **Evil.** The howls, the foaming at the mouth, and the blasphemy were all outgrowth of a terrible evil.
7. **Faithlessness.** It's possible that because of the volume of the outbursts, the constant struggle, and the seemingly powerful enemy, the disciples themselves had a crisis of faith.

Scared disciples and a powerless community paint the perfect picture of a struggling church that tries in their own strength to do what only Jesus can do. The demonized boy represents the Christless world all around us, a wicked and perverse generation. As we imagine the scene, it reminds us how futile it is to try to do anything good apart from Jesus.

There are lots of strategies people use to overcome the darkness of this age. We:

- Read books about the problem.
- Watch YouTube® videos for help.
- Ask our friends.
- Try to numb the pain.
- Complain.

But Jesus reminds us of who we are and who He is: "I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me" (John 15:5).

Regrettably, the outside world often ignores the church because believers choose to find a solution without regard for the power that they possess. Jesus is always the best place to bring our problems.

God doesn't always show up as practically and miraculously as that, but if we pay attention, He's there. He is the One who speaks softly during our chaotic messes. He is the most essential part of our day. He is the beginning and ending of everything we face. Woe unto the self-sufficient disciple who thinks he or she can do anything outside the bounds of God! It will not go well. It's like trying to fell a tree with a chainsaw but forgetting to add fuel or start the engine.

WHEN HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED A HELPLESS SITUATION ONLY GOD COULD FIX?



DIGGING DEEPER MUSTARD SEED

When Jesus referenced the mustard seed, he was likely referencing the black mustard seed, which would have been anywhere from one to two millimeters in length. That's about 1/32 to 1/16 of an inch. That's roughly the size of the flat, southernmost circular tip of a crayon. Think about how small that is. Jesus was basically saying that if we push away the doubt and give Him even the very beginnings of our faith, He can accomplish the miraculous. How much power must our faith hold if one little grain of it can move mountains? How much more could we accomplish if we allowed our faith to grow past its infancy? Jesus has given us access to a faith that is more powerful than any circumstance we could ever face.

What mountain can you apply your faith to today?



See God Working Around You //

Matthew 17:17-18

What frustrated Jesus? Was it the fact that this boy somehow got himself in this situation? Was it that these people were interfering with the day's agenda? What irked Jesus was their faithlessness. Their lack of faith wearied Him. Jesus minced no words when He talked about faithless activity. It contradicted everything they had experienced together. He is sufficient. He doesn't need anything to work out a solution. He is the solution. He tells them, "Bring him here to me" (v. 17).

In Matthew 17:18, we can only imagine the relief of the father as Jesus said, "Bring him here to me." The crowd must have winced. After all, this boy is a mess, a train wreck! He's messy, uncontrollable, defiant, and he has some nasty self-inflicted wounds. But Jesus is insistent, "Bring him here to me."

I have often tried to take the issues of my life into my own little workroom and bang out a solution on my own. Meanwhile, Jesus is waiting for me to come to my senses and realize that I need to trust Him. We see this everywhere. We see people, even believers, trying to be self-reliant as they work on problems, trying to orchestrate miracles on their own. Shame creeps in and we don't really bring it to Jesus because we think it's too big, too small, too messy, or too late. We postpone the solutions by our stubbornness, unwillingness, or lack of faith. We're afraid that if we bring our maladies and messes to Jesus and nothing happens it will shake our faith, so we choose to go at it alone. All

the while, Jesus is waiting for us to bow before Him and hand over the goods so that He can do what only He can do.

WHAT ARE REASONS WE DON'T BRING OUR ISSUES AND PROBLEMS TO JESUS?

Our nature is to believe that if we could fix things ourselves, we would somehow be more righteous and accepted. The opposite is true. If we are unwilling to relinquish our control, we will never experience the intimacy we so desperately need.

Start with Mustard Seed Faith // Matthew 17:19-20

We can imagine the disciples' frustration of struggling needlessly with the strong demonic forces they encountered and then witnessing the sheer, simplistic dominance of Jesus. They wanted to sidebar with Jesus, away from the villagers. Perhaps they were a little embarrassed. Before today, they had the power to send demons running. Why not this time? Jesus's answer is perplexing. You must have faith, but it doesn't take much faith. It all hinges on our connection with a mountain moving, demon scattering Savior.

It's not about our capacity. It's about the capacity of Jesus. The disciples' inability to cast out the demon shows that spiritual authority didn't come from their own abilities but through a deep dependence on God. True faith recognizes our need for God's help in every situation.

We all struggle with faith sometimes, especially if a situation remains the same after years of prayer. That's why Jesus taught us to pray and "not give up" (Luke 18:1). We must remember God's view that transcends our nearsighted perspective. Wouldn't it be nice if prayer was more like a microwave with a time machine setting? But that's not the way prayer works. We must realize that prayer is a process that changes us and draws us into a deeper dependence upon Him. We must always remember that larger picture.

Whenever you feel inadequate and insufficient, remember George Müller, an ordinary man with extraordinary faith. Müller felt called to help the countless orphans on the streets of England but

THE POINT: A FAITH THAT LOOKS TO JESUS IS A POWERFUL FAITH.

refused to ask anyone for financial help. Instead, he relied on the mustard seed of his faith. One famous example occurred one morning when there was no food to feed the children. Müller gathered the orphans and prayed, thanking God for the food that they had not yet received. Shortly after the prayer, a baker knocked on the door, bringing enough fresh bread to feed everyone. Then a milkman's cart broke down outside the orphanage so that the children were also able to have fresh milk.¹ This is what it means to go on an adventure with God. We have to step out in faith. George Müller's faith wasn't illustrated in one single dramatic event. His life was marked by a persistent, daily faith that built his legacy, brick by brick, day by day.

WHEN CAN EVEN A LITTLE FAITH BE A GREAT FAITH?

The clarion call for the believer rings loud and clear from the heart of Jesus: Have faith. Be encouraged by the simple truth that God isn't looking for the most attractive, talented, educated, or popular. His eye is on the one who takes Him at His word, prays faithfully, and believes consistently. When our faith falls short, we must run to the One who strengthens our faith. He overcomes every shortfall and challenges us to bring everything to Him, even when it's a mess. He specializes in messes and impossibilities.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to James 1:5, we can ask seek God for help in any situation, and we can expect that He will provide insight. I remember watching my dad years ago as he worked on his tractor. He'd been working for days attempting to figure out the problem and simply could not. Finally, he decided to ask God for help. I remember him saying, "Suddenly, I just knew what to do. I knew where the wires were supposed to go." This insight wasn't earthly. He got his tractor back working because he decided to use his faith. Think about the strength of this kind of testimony in our everyday lives. God's wisdom extends to both big and small, and all it takes is a little bit of courage to step out on faith.

Biblical Truth: "Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him" (Jas. 1:5).

How can you put God's wisdom on display more in your life?

LIVE IT

How will your faith show up this week?

Jesus compels us to trust Him and have faith, even when life feels overwhelming. When our faith fails, we can lose perspective of the larger story He is writing through our lives. Perhaps the greatest gift we could give Jesus is resilient faith even when we have little else to give. This week, no matter what the circumstance looks like or feels like, have faith in the God who is greater than your situation and not defined by circumstance. A little faith goes a long way!

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- **Pray.** What little challenges face you this week? Make a list and pray for faith to deal with these issues.
- **Engage.** We all have experienced difficult situations and broken people. It's sometimes easier to try to avoid them. Commit to engage actively with these complicated problems rather than avoiding them.
- **Dare.** Perhaps you've stopped believing a breakthrough is possible in some area of life, even to the extent that you've stopped praying about it. Ask Jesus to change your posture from doubt to faith. Commit to reengage by taking your requests to God.

DAILY READINGS

1. MUSTARD SEED SIZE FAITH // HEBREWS 11:1

Faith does not mean we know all, it means we believe even when we don't. A mustard seed is 1 to 2 millimeters big, yet it can be up to a 10-foot-tall tree. Jesus is teaching us that even the smallest amount of faith can move mountains. Faith is at work in the world every day. We see grandparents praying over wayward children, churches feeding the hungry, and believers holding on during times of trouble. Faith does not have to be perfect, but it does have to be placed in Him who is. When we are planted in God, even a small seed of faith can yield a harvest larger than we can imagine.

Trust that God can take your little faith and do the impossible.

2. "HELP MY UNBELIEF" // MARK 9:23-24

Doubt is human. Our faith strength does not protect us from experiencing doubt. The father in Mark 9 faced this same struggle. He brought his son to Jesus, hoping for a miracle yet secretly doubted in his mind. His open revelation in that instant shows a vulnerability that we all share: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" We understand His ability, but we remain uncertain about His willingness to act. True faith does not eliminate doubts, but it requires us to bring our doubts to God. Have you ever refrained from asking for increased faith because you were afraid of what the price might be?

God invites us to be real and comes to where we are.

3. FAITH IS A VERB // JAMES 2:17

Believing in faith requires more than mental acceptance because it demands active engagement. The faith of our ancestors created educational facilities and organized demonstrations and nurtured children despite every challenge. Our ancestors used their faith to endure difficult times which gave them the power to keep moving forward. According to James, faith

that does not produce action is nothing more than a dead religion. Our trust in God's door-opening power requires us to take the necessary step of knocking. Our belief in God's provision demands our willingness to give. God wants us to actively join His mission instead of simply existing as believers. Trust God, apply for the job, start the ministry, forgive that person.

This week, put your faith to work — Live what you believe!

4. STORM-PROOF FAITH // MATTHEW 8:26

The storms of life present themselves through various circumstances: mounting bills, collapsing relationships and declining health. During a literal storm the disciples lost control while Jesus slept peacefully. The disciples approached Him with fear. Jesus immediately asked them "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" This question remains relevant to our present day. Following Christ means we will encounter storms, but we gain stability through our trust in His authority over these challenges. The present storm has not surprised God in any way. He's still in control.

Choose faith instead of fear because Jesus sits beside you to calm the storm.

5. FAITH THAT SPEAKS // PROVERBS 18:21

Scripture reminds us that "death and life are in the power of the tongue." Words have the same ability to build our faith while holding the potential to destroy doubt. If you constantly speak about fear, uncertainty, failure and defeat, your faith will reflect doom. Growing up we were taught this principle—speak life! Declare God's promises over your circumstances. Speak hope in dry places. Speak healing over sickness, provision over lack, and peace over chaos. Your words are not just sounds; they shape your faith and future. Speak with faith, stand on His Word, and watch how God moves when you declare His truth over your life.

Let your words reflect trust in an all-powerful God and let your actions follow.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Reflect on your spiritual life and identify places where your faith falls short. As you prepare to teach, ask God to help you strengthen your faith. Write a short journal reflection and include encouraging Scriptures. This will help you walk with learners as you lead them to strengthen their faith through the lesson. Consider sharing part of your reflection as a testimony to encourage the class this week.

DEFINING FAITH

Study the biblical definition of faith. Reread Hebrews 11 and examine the individuals named in this chapter. Pray and select one of person to study more. Read the original, biblical account of that person's story. Reflect on that person's faith. What life lessons do you glean from this person? Consider why God chose to include this person in the Hebrews 11 faith chapter. Consider sharing what you learned as you teach this week's lesson.

LOOK BACK

Request the previous lesson to insert the look back.

TEACHING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

DO: Ask learners to name different types of crisis adults face. List them on the board and leave space at the top to write two words after the list is generated. Encourage both challenging and more light-hearted examples. After the list is completed, discuss the similarities and differences between how "seasoned" believer and new believers handle crisis. Make the concluding observation that all of us face the same challenges and trials. In this lesson we will talk about what to do when we face circumstances in life where our faith falls short.

TRANSITION: Read **The Point:** "A faith that looks to Jesus is a powerful faith" and the session question: "What can believers do when their faith falls short?" to introduce the session.

PACK ITEM: Display **Pack Item 1, the "Limited Resources, Limitless God"** poster, to introduce the major theme of this study, along with the focus of each session.

DIG INTO THE TEXT

Without Faith We Fail //

Matthew 17:14-16

READ: Read the lesson introduction and point back to the list of crisis and challenging circumstances that you created at the beginning of the class.

DO: Lead the class in prayer and ask God to help everyone in attendance today to be better equipped to respond when their faith falls short.

GUIDE: Refer to the commentary to explain the setting of this section of Scripture. Point out the contrast between what happened on the mountaintop and what was happening in the crowd. As believers, we need to be strong in the faith in good and bad times.

READ: Invite a participant to read the title, "Without faith we fail" and the first paragraph from the learner pages. Have learners underline "Why? Why me, God"? in their books and allow one or two individuals to share about a time they asked God that question.

ASK: "How has God responded to your question 'Why me God?'"

READ: Select someone to read Matthew 17:14-16.

ASK: "What about this situation made the father desperate? and How can the church surround a person who is at their wits end?"

GUIDE: Use the commentary for verse 15. Paint a picture of what the presence of evil looked like in the life of this family. Remind learners that we need God to overcome evil.

THE POINT: A FAITH THAT LOOKS TO JESUS IS A POWERFUL FAITH.

EXPLAIN: Explain to participants that people have a lot of ways we try to overcome darkness in their own strength. Read the strategies in the learner pages (p.13) in the paragraph that begins "There are a lot...." Invite individuals to share other strategies and discuss how the church can receive people who are at the end of their faith and point them to Christ?

See God Working Around You // Matthew 17:17-18

READ: Enlist a learner to read Matthew 17:17-18.

GUIDE: Use the commentary (p.98), to further explain verse 17.

ASK: "How did Jesus feel about the situation?"

EMPHASIZE: Have learners highlight in the commentary as you summarize. Underline, exasperation, indignation, rebuke, and wicked generation. Jesus immediately stepped into the situation. Ask two questions. What did Jesus ask the father to do? Who solved the problem?

DISCUSS: Read the learner pages (p. 14), and emphasize the writer's reflections on how we try to solve life issues on our own. Point out that when man could not fix the problem, Jesus did. Invite a learner to share a time they tried to fix a problem on their own. Ask. And how did that work out for you?

ASK: "What are reasons we don't bring our issues and problems to Jesus?"

READ: Read the last paragraph in this part of the learner section (p.15). Point out that the father had to bring his son to Jesus. The father relinquished control to Jesus and Jesus took care of the problem.

EMPHASIZE: Emphasize that we must willing to give control of our situations to Jesus.

Start with Mustard Seed Faith // Matthew 17:19-20

SAY: "Now, no lesson on Matthew 17 is complete without looking at an actual mustard seed. Show the learners an actual mustard seed. It can be a

physical seed or a picture of a seed."

DIGGING DEEPER: Turn to the Digging Deeper (p.13), section and review it to share more about the mustard seed.

ASK: "What mountain can you apply your faith to today?"

READ: Invite a learner to read Matthew 17:19-20.

SUMMARIZE: Summarize the story of George Muller. Discuss the challenges Muller faced. Point out the problem of orphans at that time and make clear that Muller did not have the help of the community. His prayer precipitated the miracles of God stepping in where he his capacity ended.

DISCUSS: Lead learners to share a time when praying about a situation changed you.

ASK: "Do we immediately go to God when our capacity ends?"

DO: Hold up the image of the mustard seed again. Point out its size. It is obviously small. If we bring a mustard seed of faith to the table, we don't have to have much.

ASK: "When can even a little faith be a great faith?"

SAY: Our challenges may feel like we cannot move them, and we would be correct. Let's be like Muller and pull our community together and go to God in prayer. Then, watch for God to work.

PACK ITEM: "Display **Pack Item 2, the "Our Limitations and God's Provision"** poster, to provide an opportunity for the group to give testimonies of God's goodness throughout the unit. Invite the group to add more examples of our limitations and God's provision each week after the Scripture has been read.



PACK ITEM 1



PACK ITEM 2



OBJECT LESSON

DO: Do a Google image search of “person dragging a large stone.” Print a royalty-free image of a person trying to push or carry a stone that is too large to move.

DISCUSS: Discuss how hard it can be to press through when our faith falls short. While we cannot carry heavy weights on our own, God desires to help us get through challenging situations. For example, we may not be able to carry a large object, but we can move it with help.

CHALLENGE: When circumstances become too difficult to handle, put them in God’s hand because he can help you carry any weight.

CLOSE THE SESSION

READ: Read James 1:5.

DID YOU KNOW: Summarize the Did You Know? Section (p.15). Have participants list big challenges they need God’s help to walk through. Next, have participants list what they would call smaller challenges. Help learners understand that God wants to help in every situation, large or small.

ASK: “How can you put God’s wisdom on display more in your life?” Discuss and have learners circle one large and one small challenge to take to God this week.

PRAY: Dear Lord, we are living in uncertain times and on any day, difficult circumstances may come our way. Would you strengthen our faith so that it does not fall short? Amen.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 17:14-16

Connection to the Point: Jesus’s disciples did not have the faith to heal.

The Setting. The first part of the chapter recaps the scene of the Transfiguration on a mountain (most likely Mount Hermon) just to the north of Caesarea Philippi. The healing story that followed served to contrast Jesus’s healing power as He depended upon God in the face of the lack of believing faith and prayer on the part of the disciples. As Jesus, along with Peter, James, and John, descended from this mountaintop experience, the scene shifted from a vision of glory to a jarring scene of chaos.

Verse 14. Following the mountaintop experience, Jesus and three of His disciples crashed into the misery and suffering of the everyday world. The boisterous mob gathered around a distressed father who had brought his epileptic son to the remaining disciples, seeking deliverance from the boy’s affliction. The disciples had failed to help the man’s son. A man approached and knelt down before him. The man drew near with great respect. The combination of terms demonstrated an obvious show of homage but also a posture of begging desperation.

Verse 15. “Lord,” he said, “have mercy on my son. By using this term, the father likely meant nothing more than to show respect for Jesus as a rabbi and someone who might heal his son. The father prostrated himself before Jesus and begged Him to do something, literally to show this boy mercy or compassion. Mark’s description of the boy’s seizures were that he was “unable to speak,” “foams at the mouth,” “grinds his teeth,” and “becomes rigid” (Mark 9:17-20), all symptoms which point to epilepsy. From Mark’s account (Mark 9:17-18), the cause behind the boy’s affliction is identified as “a spirit” while Matthew’s account identifies it as a demon (Matt. 17:18).

Verse 16. The disappointed father explained that the nine disciples had failed to heal his son. In Matthew 10, when Jesus commissioned His twelve disciples, He gave them authority to cast out demons and heal every disease and illness. Doubtless they had cast out demons during their mission in Galilee. However, the disciples whom Jesus had left at the foot of the mountain now stood by unable to heal the man's son due to their weakness of faith (v. 20). These nine disciples did not have the faith to heal, perhaps because they failed to remain connected to Jesus through prayer and meditating on what He had told them (John 15:5).

MATTHEW 17:17-18

Connection to the Point: Jesus rebuked their lack of faith.

Verse 17. Jesus's response likely caught everyone off guard. Fed up with their unbelief and lack of faith, Jesus expressed His exasperation with these two questions. He may have directed the first question to His disciples, thereby providing a glimpse of His challenge of having to put up with His disciples' lack of faith and understanding. His rebuke and questions follow immediately after the statement of the disciples' inability and may reveal Jesus's exasperation as well as pointing to the nearness of the culmination of His earthly ministry. Now having made His complaint, Jesus would not leave the young boy in the power of the demon and turned His attention to the boy, telling the father to bring his son to Him.

Verse 18. As soon as the boy arrived, Jesus commanded the demon to leave with a sharp rebuke and moved to bring the exorcism to a speedy conclusion. Just as when Jesus rebuked the wind and waves, resulting in immediate calm seas (Matt. 8:26), when He rebuked the demon it immediately abandoned the boy. The verbs, "rebuked," "came out," and "was healed" all indicate simultaneous action and not sequential results. In other words, as soon as Jesus rebuked the demon, it departed, and the boy was immediately and permanently cured. The

demon did not dillydally or mull over his options. He had no other choice. Jesus's authoritative word completely overwhelmed and overcame the demon, and it obeyed Him instantaneously.

MATTHEW 17:19-20

Connection to the Point: The presence of faith is what matters, not the amount of faith.

Verses 19-20. The disciples had tried and failed to heal the young man. Given their ineffectiveness, they huddled around Jesus to find out why. This marked the beginning in Matthew of several private gatherings of Jesus with His disciples where they would come to Him with their questions seeking greater understanding (Matt. 13:10,36; 18:1; 24:3). Their ineffectiveness only increased their confusion. Since they had done so in the past, they wanted to know why they had failed this time. Jesus attributed their failure to their little faith. The singular word translated as "little faith" appears only here in the New Testament.

For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed. This phrase stressed the importance and authority of Jesus. Literally, the phrase meant "Amen I tell you" or "I am telling you the truth." Jesus balanced His rebuke with an optimistic tone by promising that even a small amount of faith in the Lord can work miracles. The idea of faith the size of a mustard seed not only included the size or amount of faith but also faith's potential to grow. Faith can grow when nurtured and cultivated. As faith grows, the potential for God-sized results exist. The hyperbolic language—the small mustard seed and the massive mountain—laid the groundwork for this episode's application. One need not imagine Jesus pointing to Mount Hermon telling it to move and the disciples waiting for it to happen. No doubt, He intended this to be understood metaphorically, yet it underscored the object of the believer's faith.

Note: Additional commentary can be found at you.lifeway.com.