

FOUR REALMS OF FAITH

Have faith in God

The prayer of faith is primarily an expression of faith in God himself. Like any father he will always do what is best, whether we like it or not. So we TRUST him because he always acts towards us—

- with love
- with power
- with fairness
- with faithfulness
- with goodness

Have faith in his promise

God has given us many promises on which we can base our faith. God has committed himself to keep his Word. See 1 Kings 18:56; Psalm 145:14. He will give us what he promises (Luke 11:9-13)—

- Peace (John 14:27)
- Salvation (Acts 16:31)
- Healing (Mark 16:18; James 5:14)
- Deliverance (Colossians 1:13)
- Daily needs (Lord's Prayer)
- Victory (Romans 8:37; 2 Cor 2:14)
- Power (Acts 1:8)

Four realms of faith

So why don't God's promises always seem to come to pass? In the Bible, effective faith is the province of at least four groups of people

1. Personal faith

Personal faith may be the determining factor. Many times Jesus told people it was their own faith which healed them. See Matthew 9:22; Luke 17:19; 18:42. See also Act 14:9

2. Vicarious faith

The faith of another may be the determining factor—

- A centurion (Matt 8:13)
- Friends of a paralytic (Matt 9:2)
- A Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:28)

We must not underestimate the power of faith exercised on behalf of others. eg parents with children.

3. Ministering faith

The faith of those ministering may be the determining factor. Eg Jesus' disciples at Tabor (Matt 17:20). Those who minister to the sick need to minister in faith. When people are struggling, the faith of the ministers can often make the difference!

4. Community faith

The faith of the community at large may be the determining factor eg Nazareth (Mark 6:5,6). The church community can also live in a realm of unbelief--denominationally and locally. As a church we can lift our faith to a higher plain. While recognising God's sovereignty, we must not use that as an excuse for complacency in ministry to the needy.

How faith is strengthened

- By prayer (Luke 17:5; Mark 9:24).
- By the Scriptures (Romans 10:17, ESV).
- By the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:9).
- By confession (Romans 10:9,10; Heb 10:23).
- By praise (2 Chron 20:21,22; Psalm 34:1-3)
- By love (Gal 5:6).
- By fellowship (Hebrews 10:25).

Claiming the victory

There is a realm of faith we have yet to tap. By God's grace we can do it!

SOMETHING TO THINK OR TALK ABOUT

Read: Mark 11:12-14, 20-25

Remember: You don't have to answer all the questions. Choose those that seem most relevant.

Biblical

1. The action of Jesus in cursing the fig tree is unusual. It is one of the rare times when a miracle was destructive rather than creative. Why do you think Jesus did it?
2. Why is it important that Jesus said, 'Have faith in God' rather than 'Have faith in the Word of God'? Chapter 1 of B.Chant, *Walking with a Limp* (Open Book, 2002) might be relevant here.
3. What do you think are the three most important words in verse 23 and why? Different people may choose different words. That's OK. But you need to be able to say why you think they are important. (You could go round the group with each person taking one word at a time and explaining why they chose it.)
4. What is the significance of the word 'says'? Why didn't Jesus say, 'prays'? (Compare the use of the word 'rebuked' in Luke 4:35, 39, 41; 8:24; 9:42—what do we learn from this? See also Luke 10:19; Acts 3:6.)

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5. ‘Have received’ in v.24 is unexpected. We would expect ‘will receive’. Did Jesus get his grammar wrong? Or is there a reason why he said this? What do you think? Compare 1 John 5:14, 15.
6. What connection is there between forgiveness and faith? (25) Remember the relevant part of the Lord’s Prayer. See also Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13.

Personal and practical

7. Sometimes we hesitate to believe what Jesus said about the power of faith in case we act out of God’s will. Make a list of the things we know we can trust God for, because the Bible clearly says they are his will. (Give Scripture references as well.)
8. What mountains are facing you right now? In the light of what Jesus said, how can you approach them?
9. Think of an example from your own experience of someone (yourself maybe) whose prayers have been hindered because of unforgiveness. Share with the group (but disguise names etc).
10. Examine your own heart: is there someone you need to forgive? Pray about it.

About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

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