

Come Follow Me Podcast
Elo Vix Production
Week 16
Matt 15-17, Mark 7-9

John Maxwell once said: "Most people don't like change. They revolt against it unless they can clearly see the advantage it brings. For that reason, when good leaders prepare to take action or make changes, they take people through a process to get them ready for it."

He also said: "People only change when they hurt enough that they have to; When they see enough they are inspired to; When they learn enough they want to; when they receive enough that they are able to."

Jesus is the Master at this process of change. He was before his mortal birth, during His earthly ministry and He still is today in our personal lives. But.... and this is a big but! He can only do as much as we allow Him to.

Let's look at a couple of examples:

In Mark 8 after he rebukes the Pharisees for seeking a sign and tempting Him he crosses over to the other side in a boat with His disciples. During their little trip on the water and some confusion about bread Jesus says:

"perceive ye not yet, neither understand? **have** ye your heart yet **hardened**?"

18 Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?
(Mark 8:17-18)

Then we immediately after get this very confusing story that many reason in their hearts to be something it's not:

22 ¶ And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his **hands** upon him, he asked him if he saw [anything] **ought**.

24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

25 After that he put *his* hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw **every man** clearly.

26 And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell *it* to any in the town.

Now, this little exchange can raise some questions. Did Jesus run out of power? Did he not use enough spit? This is the only time we see Jesus touch a person more than once to heal

them. It is also, only Mark that records this event. No other gospel writer includes this healing in their accounts. So I feel that it is important that we understand what is happening here. I'll share with you what I believe.

At first we read that friends of this man brought him to Jesus to be healed. There is a chance that this man really didn't know what was happening or didn't really believe the accounts that he had heard of this "Great Healer". But he goes along with it and holds tight to his friends who led him to Jesus. This next part is also not a common practice we read in the life of Jesus. "He took the man by the hand, and led him out of the town." There are two head scratchers here: First, He took the man by the hand. There was a common belief in that day that if someone had an ailment like leprosy, blindness, mute, cripple; it was because of sin. Therefore they were considered outcasts. And most wouldn't even consider touching the unclean. Coming out of the Covid pandemic we know what this feels like. We all had similar feelings when we came across someone with the virus. Jesus, though, has no such notions. He takes this man by the hand, and He touches the leper, He lifted the lame, and laid His hands on all that were sick. This is a great lesson for us to learn as we are called upon to administer to the sick as disciples of Christ. The power of Christ, His priesthood power is greater than any worldly disease of virus.

The second part is that He led this man out of the town. Why? We have seen Him dismiss the critical and heal in a crowd but this is a unique account of Him leading the man away from everyone to be alone with him. There is a particular reason that He did this. And you'll see why in this next part: Jesus took some of His spit and touched the man's eyes, Giving him a partial healing. He asks the man: What do you see? The man responds: I see men as trees walking. In other words: it's blurry, I can see some light and some images around me. Why do you think this is? I can assure you that this is not because Jesus ran out of healing power. I believe it is because this man was brought by his friends and his friends had faith for this man to be healed. So, Jesus heals him... a little. According to the faith of his friends. He heals him just enough to draw out the man's own faith. Sometimes in our lives we are blinded by the world around us and we don't see things clearly enough to understand or believe completely. But we can see a little. And it is an acceptance of those small things, those mini miracles that can draw out greater faith than what we currently have. This man received enough for him to realize that Jesus was who they said He was and it boosted his faith to perfect healing.

We see this same principle in another story we study this week contained in Mark nine of the man who brings his son to the Savior. I'll share the account in the words of President Holland:

"On one occasion Jesus came upon a group arguing vehemently with His disciples. When the Savior inquired as to the cause of this contention, the father of an afflicted child stepped forward, saying he had approached Jesus's disciples for a blessing for his son, but they were not able to provide it. With the boy still gnashing his teeth, foaming from the mouth, and thrashing on the ground in front of them, the father appealed to Jesus with what must have been last-resort desperation in his voice:

“If thou canst do any thing,” he said, “have compassion on us, and help us.

“Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

“And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”¹

This man’s initial conviction, by his own admission, is limited. But he has an urgent, emphatic desire in behalf of his only child. We are told that is good enough for a beginning. “Even if ye can no more than *desire to believe*,” Alma declares, “let this desire work in you, even until ye believe.”² With no other hope remaining, this father asserts what faith he has and pleads with the Savior of the world, “If *thou* canst do *any thing*, have compassion on *us*, and help *us*.”³ I can hardly read those words without weeping. The plural pronoun *us* is obviously used intentionally. This man is saying, in effect, “Our whole family is pleading. Our struggle never ceases. We are exhausted. Our son falls into the water. He falls into the fire. He is continually in danger, and we are continually afraid. We don’t know where else to turn. Can *you* help us? We will be grateful for *anything*—a partial blessing, a glimmer of hope, some small lifting of the burden carried by this boy’s mother every day of her life.”

“If *thou* canst do *any thing*,” spoken by the father, comes back to him “If *thou* canst *believe*,” spoken by the Master.⁴

“Straightway,” the scripture says—not slowly nor skeptically nor cynically but “straightway”—the father cries out in his unvarnished parental pain, “Lord, I believe;

help thou mine unbelief.” In response to new and still partial faith, Jesus heals the boy, almost literally raising him from the dead”.⁵

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2013/04/lord-i-believe?lang=eng>

These two accounts are similar in nature. They have to deal with people who have faith in Jesus. but, small faith, less than mustard seed faith. Faith that comes in and out of our lives. We have all been at that point when we question what it is exactly that we believe. When we are forced to reflect on the experiences of our life and decide if trusting in God or not is the right course for our lives. I recall that moment in my life. And for most, it is a series of events or trials that really force us to look at the level of our faith. When those moments come please take Elder Hollands advise when he says:

“In moments of fear or doubt or troubling times, hold the ground you have already won, even if that ground is limited. In the growth we all have to experience in mortality, the spiritual equivalent of this boy’s affliction or this parent’s desperation is going to come to all of us. When those moments come and issues surface, the resolution of which is not immediately forthcoming, *hold fast to what you already know and stand strong until additional knowledge comes.*”

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Just as the blind man who experienced a little bit of healing as he relied on the faith of his friends, you too can rely on the faith of your friends and family as you experience your first steps of faith. Then in time as Jesus does what you allow Him to do your faith will grow and your eyes will be open, you will begin to see and hear and feel, If you seek it diligently. If you keep walking in that direction and as you continue to forsake the world and turn towards God, your faith will become the most important force that drives your life. I testify that this is God's way, It is the only way to peace and joy and miracles.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.