

**“Lord, I Believe;  
Help My Unbelief!”**

**Mark. 9:24**

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- “Most Americans believe in God but don't know the religious tenets of their own denomination” *(Cathy Lynn Grossman, USA TODAY, U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey, released by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life)*
- Or the tenets of truth in the scriptures. *(PRB)*

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- 86% believe in God or a higher power, but don't know own traditions or of neighbors across the street or around the globe.
- Among 3,412 adults surveyed, only 2% correctly answered at least 29 of 32 questions on the Bible, major religious figures, beliefs and practices. The average score was 16 correct (50%).
- Atheists score highest in religious knowledge
- 55% of Catholic respondents knew the core teaching that the bread and wine in the Mass become the body and blood of Christ (transubstantiation), and are not merely symbols.

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- Only 19% of Protestants knew their denomination’s basic tenet of salvation is through faith alone.
- Only 55% of all respondents knew the Golden Rule isn't one of the Ten Commandments
- Only 45% could name all four Gospel accounts.
- Fewer than half (47%) knew that the Dalai Lama is a Buddhist; 27% knew most people in Indonesia are Muslims.
- "People say, 'I have a personal connection with God and that's really all I need to know.'" (*Pew's Alan Cooperman, co-author*)

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- The single question most people answered correctly: 89% knew that according to rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court, public school teachers cannot lead their classes in prayer.
- But only 36% of respondents knew teachers are allowed to teach classes comparing world religions
- Just 23% knew that teachers can read from the Bible as an example of literature.
- In contrast, 54% could name the Quran as Islam's holy text.

# “Lord, I Believe; Help My Unbelief!”

- In a nation of un-learned believers, how long will it be before we become a nation of non-believers?
- How do we increase our own faith, let alone the faith of a religiously decaying nation?

# Mark 9:14-29

- Jesus chided His disciples for their lack of faith
  - Mark 9:19-22
- Jesus responded to the plea of the father
  - Mark 9:23-24
  - “I believe. I have faith. I do put confidence in you, though I know that my faith is not as strong as it should be. Give me strength and will to put entire confidence in you.” (Barnes Notes)
  - “Help mine unbelief, help me to a pardon for it, help me with power against it; help out what is wanting in my faith with thy grace, thy strength (Matthew Henry)

# Mark 9:14-29

- Jesus heals the deaf-mute boy
  - Mark 9:25-27
- Jesus privately informs the disciples of the reason for their failure
  - Mark 9:28-29
  - Prayer not only invokes God's help, it also reminds them that it is by God's power that it will be done, and fasting is the means whereby they measure and manifest their own seriousness and sincerity by humbling themselves

# The Application

- Mark 9:23 - “...All things are possible to him who believes...”
  - As one author put it: “All things are possible, but they must be on the menu”
  - It must be God’s will.

# The Application

- The importance of faith
  - Heb. 11:6 - “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”
  - Matt. 8:13 - “Then Jesus said to the centurion, Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you. And his servant was healed that same hour.”
  - Matt. 9:22, 29 - “But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well. And the woman was made well from that hour... 29 Then He touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith let it be to you.”

# The Application

- Our faith, while important, is not always sufficient. God must be involved, for only with Him are all things possible
  - Luke 1:37 - “For with God nothing will be impossible.”

# The Application

- Fasting was often joined with prayer to incur God's favor
  - Ezra 8:21, 23 - “Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions... 23 So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.”

# The Application

- Fasting served to humble oneself before God
  - Psalm 35:13 - “But as for me, when they were sick, My clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; And my prayer would return to my own heart.”

# The Application

- Humility calls for God's favor
  - Isa. 57:15 - “For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

# The Application

- Therefore, the righteous often served God with fasting and prayer
  - Luke 2:36-37 - “Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; 37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.”
  - Acts 13:2-3 - “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. 3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.”

# The Application

- In a nation of ignorance, unbelief is not far behind.
- Among disciples who think they can take care of themselves, failure follows
- In Christians who fail, falling away waits in the wings
- Jesus answer to all is grow in faith, be steadfast in prayer, surrender whatever it takes to succeed