



## LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

### “Increasing Our Faith”

Dr. Rice Brooks - Dec. 28, 2014

#### WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. *No right or wrong answers.*

- *What's the greatest step of faith you have ever taken? What was the outcome?*
- *Did you grow up in a mono-ethnicity environment or in a multiethnic one?*
- *If you were in front of Jesus and you could ask him only one question, what would it be?*

#### WORD (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at <http://www.bethelworld.org/media/>

And he said to his disciples, “Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.” The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” And the Lord said, “If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you. “Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table?’ Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink?’ Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’” (Luke 17:1-10 ESV)

And Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.” And Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” (Mark 11:21-25 ESV)

In this passage we see two events or stories that we usually disconnect from each other. One deals with forgiveness and the other one with faith. Nevertheless, Luke, the author of this passage clearly sees that they are mutually and strongly connected. We will look at five lessons we learn from this passage:

1. Everything good and great that is going to happen in our lives will come about through faith. When we read Hebrews 11 about the hall of faith, every statement about those heroes of the faith starts with the statement *öby faithí* ö Many times we try to imitate the actions of those heroes without imitating their faith. Other times we try to live out of the exploits of somebody else's faith, but anything good we want to do in life we will have to exercise our own faith.
2. God has already given us enough faith to get started. As soon as Jesus told the disciples they needed to forgive, they asked for more faith. In a way, they were saying: *öwe can't forgive unless you do something else in us.*" However, Jesus by his command is affirming that they already have what it takes to do what they have been asked to. We have faith to take the first step.
3. Ground zero of walking in faith is forgiveness. The first step of faith God asks us to take is to forgive, as he has forgiven us. Forgiveness is so foundational to Christian life, that if it doesn't work, everything else falls down.
4. Faith can increase, but not merely by asking for it. We must exercise what we already have by acting on it. We exercise faith when we walk in God's Word and not in our own feelings or reasoning. Those giant of the faith that we may admire, have the same muscles of faith that we do, they just have developed them more than we may have.
5. Faith does not work in an unforgiving heart. If we have to have the kind faith that uproots trees and removes mountains, we need to forgive those who have offended us. We may have all the accountability in place, but if our heart is unwilling to forgive, those evil practices will come back to our lives.

### **PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)**

**Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.**

- *What's a practical step(s) you need to take to exercise your faith?*
- *What do you need to believe God for? What does the Bible say about that specific issue?*
- *What do you need to do to walk in forgiveness?*

### **PRAYER (10-15 minutes)**

**Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.**

- *Pray that the Holy Spirit will give you a forgiving heart.*
- *Pray that God's grace would strengthen you in your weakness so you can exercise your faith daily.*
- *Pray that God will use us, as his church, to be the agents of social and ethnical reconciliation.*