

## Understanding Faith Part One – Creative Faith

- *The Greek Word “little faith” (ὀλιγόπιστος - oligopistos) is used five times in the New Testament and four of those occurrences are found in the Gospel of Matthew.*
- *In each occurrence Christ showed His disciples areas where their faith still lacked the depth and maturity necessary to withstand the rigors, challenges, and trials of life.*
- *Our faith may be stronger in specific areas, but Jesus wants our faith to grow and mature in every area of our lives.*
- *Each time Jesus confronted them with their weak faith He included the rebuke “O You of Little Faith.”*
- *Jesus’ motivation for pointing out their “little faith” was not to humiliate or discourage them, but to help them to recognize aspects of their faith that were weak.*
- *He wanted them to develop an unshakeable faith, enabling them to stand strong in the face of whatever trials, hardships, or uncertainties life would throw at them.*
- *Jesus was preparing His apostles to establish the Church on such a firm foundation, that even the gates of Hell could not prevail.*
- *Jesus’ disciples became so strong and unshakeable in their faith, that even in the face of persecution, it was their persecutors who became unhinged.*
- *In Acts 17:6 it is recorded that the Jews lamented to the Roman rulers about the power, persuasiveness, and how unstoppable the gospel message was by describing the followers of Jesus as “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.”*
- *However, before the Church and the Apostles could be established in the grace of God, their unshakeable confidence in Jesus Christ had to be established and the “littleness” of their faith had to be overcome.*
- *The Greek word ὀλιγόπιστος (oligopistos) “little faith” comes from two roots, “little” ὀλίγος (oligos) and “faith” πιστός (pistos).*

- *The Greek word “little” ὀλίγος (oligos) conveys the idea of something that is small or weak. The word “oligos” is used to emphasize the smallness of something.*
- *The Greek word “faith” πιστός (pistos) speaks of a strong and unshakeable confidence in someone or something.*
- *Thus ὀλιγόπιστος (oligopistos) “little faith” may be seen as an oxymoron or a contradictory term because faith which is meant to make someone strong, confident, and unshakeable is actually so weak and small that it results in people who are insecure, hesitant, unstable, and easily shaken.*
- *“Little faith” actually conveys the idea of lacking faith and confidence in God.*
- *An example of “little” ὀλίγος (oligos) being used in combination with another word to convey weakness is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:14.*

#### **1 Thessalonians 5:14 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup>Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the **fainthearted**, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

- *The word “fainthearted” ὀλιγόψυχος (oligopsychos) is made up of the two Greek words “small” (oligos) and “soul” (psychos) and thus a small or weak souled person. It defines a person who is very weak and easily discouraged, timid, and collapses at the least hardship or adversity.*
- *In the same way “little faith” ὀλιγόπιστος—oligopistos—means a faith that is small, weak, and easily collapses at the least opposition or difficulty.*
- *In contrast to Jesus’ warning against having “little faith,” He spoke about faith as a mustard seed in a very positive light.*

#### **Matthew 17:20 (NKJV)**

<sup>20</sup>So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

- *After Jesus rebuked the disciples for their unbelief, He encouraged them by saying that even if their faith was as small as a mustard seed it could move mountains.*

#### **Mark 4:31–32 (NKJV)**

<sup>31</sup>It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth;

<sup>32</sup>but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade.”

- *When Jesus compared true faith to a mustard seed He was emphasizing the vitality and life it contains.*
- *Even a young believer who may consider himself as having only mustard seed faith is capable of doing great exploits through His faith in Christ.*
- *Faith as a mustard seed shows how true faith—even when it is small and young—is vibrant and when acted upon will grow strong to become so great that many can take shelter in it.*
- *When a Christian has unshakeable confidence in Jesus during difficult or troubling times, both unbelievers and believers will be drawn to that person to find peace, hope, and comfort.*
- *Many times Christians misunderstand the concept of faith in God and attempt mental or emotional gymnastics to cause them to “believe more.” Their attention is diverted from focusing on Jesus to focusing on themselves as they vainly try to have more faith.*
- *Faith means having a strong confidence in something or someone. As Christians our faith is in Jesus Christ and as we look to Jesus we learn to live by faith. “and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20b).*
- *We are not to have faith in faith, but faith in Jesus Christ and His faithfulness.*
- *The term “little faith” points to a faith that is the opposite of a growing and vibrant faith. “Little faith” is defective and weak since it has a wrong or limited image of God that hinders the person from trusting Jesus and having confidence in God.*
- *In fact, the term “little faith” points to a lack of faith, while “mustard seed faith” speaks about a genuine faith and confidence in Christ.*

#### Galatians 2:16 (KJV)

<sup>16</sup> Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

- *True faith is not only faith in Jesus Christ but it is faith that comes from Jesus Christ—“even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ.”*

- *Twice in this verse, faith is described as Christ's faith. Because we have received faith from God we are able to believe in Jesus Christ.*
- *Genuine faith comes from God but we must choose to receive it and act upon it.*
- *It is very important to understand that although the origin of our faith is from God and not something we can produce, we must act daily on that faith for it to grow and develop.*
- *The way our faith grows is by simply directing our full attention to Jesus and all that He has done for us at Calvary and all that He has promised to do for us through His Word. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17).*

#### Hebrews 12:2 NKJV

<sup>2</sup> looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- *Mustard seed faith enables us to learn to take the heavy burdens of life and give them over to Jesus while "little faith" magnifies our problems and causes our image of God to grow smaller.*
- *From the four times that Jesus says, "O you of little faith" in the Gospel of Matthew we can identify four things that attack our faith and God's strategy to overcome them.*
- *There are four aspects to faith and each one releases God's Glory:*
- *Creative Faith – This is the power of faith – the Glory of His Name*
- *Doctrinal Faith – This is the truth of faith – the Glory of His Word*
- *Persevering Faith - This is the strength of faith – the Glory of His Life*
- *God Conscious Faith - This is the reality of faith – the Glory of His Presence*
- *The first time Jesus rebuked His disciples with the words, "O you of little faith" is found in Matthew 6:30.*

<sup>30</sup>Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

- *This rebuke relates to Creative Faith and warns against those things that oppose receiving God's provision and resists God working miraculously in our lives.*
- *Through creative faith, God's provision is released in our lives whether through miracles, healings, or His divine supply for those areas where we are experiencing lack.*

- *One example of creative faith is when Jesus fed the five thousand by multiplying the five loaves and two fishes. (Matthew 14:19).*
- *The very first time a believer experiences creative faith is when they repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ and are born again. At that moment something wonderful took place—we became a new creation!*

## 2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

## Matthew 6:25–34 (NKJV)

<sup>25</sup>“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?”

- *It is evident when reading the context of the reproof, “O you of little faith,” that it contains a warning against worrying. Of the six times the Greek word for worry is used in the Gospel of Matthew, five of those occurrences are found in Matthew Chapter 6 in relationship to “O you of little faith.”*
- *The Greek word for worry means “to have anxious thoughts, to have anxiety based on possible danger, misfortune, or the uncertainties of life.”*
- *Worry distorts our view of what is really important.*
- *“Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” The Greek word translated as “life” is the word “soul.” Is our soul not more important than what we eat and wear? Worry causes our value system to become skewed.*
- *Worry blinds us to the value of eternal things and causes us to focus only on our immediate needs or troubles. Worry blinds us to God’s faithfulness and provision.*

<sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

- *Worry distorts our image of God’s character and causes us to doubt His faithfulness and provision. Worry is the enemy of creative faith. Worry and faith cannot coexist.*
- *We become blind to God’s faithfulness even though all creation testifies to God’s provision, faithfulness, wisdom, and power.*

- *Worry causes us to not only doubt God, but to mistrust Him.*
- *We don't trust that God is able or willing to meet our needs.*
- *We don't trust that He values or cares for us.*
- *We don't trust in His love.*

<sup>27</sup>**Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?**

- **“And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life.” (NRSV).**
- *Worry is the opposite of creative faith because worry does not and cannot produce anything.*
- *Worry steals and depletes our strength and faith. Creative faith produces life; worry produces death.*
- **“The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety.” George Mueller**
- **“Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength.” Corrie Ten Boom**
- *If you pray why worry and if you worry why pray? Worry hinders us from receiving from God.*

<sup>28</sup>**So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;**

<sup>29</sup>**and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.**

- *Jesus then posed the question, “So why do you worry?”*
- *Jesus directs our attention to Solomon and all the glory, riches, and power he had as a king. However, Solomon in all his glory could not array himself as beautifully as a little insignificant flower found in the field.*

<sup>30</sup>**Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?**

- **“Will He not much more clothe you?” *God's provision is sufficient.***
- *If God cares so much for temporal things such as the grass of the field, will He not be even more attentive to us who have eternal value!*
- **“O you of little faith” *The smallness of our faith hinders us from trusting Him and moving in creative faith and believing in God's provision.***

<sup>31</sup>**Therefore do not worry**, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

- *“Therefore do not worry” This is the conclusion Jesus is driving home to all His followers.*
- *Don’t ask, “Where is God when I need Him?” but say, “My God shall supply all my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19).*

<sup>32</sup>**For** after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

- *God knows your needs.*
- *God will respond to your needs.*

<sup>33</sup>**But** seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

- *Sometimes we worry because our priorities are wrong and we confuse needs with wants.*
- *When we put God first in our lives, we begin to have a more balanced view of our priorities and of our lives.*

<sup>34</sup>**Therefore do not worry** about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

- *“Therefore do not worry” — Again, this instruction is emphasized.*
- *If we continue to worry and fail to trust God, we will condemn ourselves to a life of worry because there will always be plenty of things to worry about.*
- *Instead, we must exercise our faith and choose to trust God for our needs today and for the uncertainties of tomorrow.*
- *The context of the passages in Matthew, Chapter six that we just studied deal with being free from worry and resting our faith in God’s provision.*
- *In Jesus’ teaching, we learn that we can trust God to provide for our needs, implying that we will face times when we will have needs, experience lack, and face hardship.*
- *Creative faith can only grow and develop when we have opportunities to trust God and then witness His divine provision.*

- *It took years of George Mueller experiencing lack and God's provision until his faith became unshakeable even in the face of the impossible.*
- *As young believers, often we will experience quick and spectacular answers to our prayers. As we grow in our relationship with God He is asking us to believe and continue to seek Him and pray even when there are sometimes long intervals between making our requests known and the subsequent answers to our prayers.*
- *Sometimes God allows or even engineers circumstances in our lives that may puzzle us as to why these things are happening.*
- *However, I have learned—I don't always know what is best for me or what I really need, but God does. "For who knows what is good for man in life." (Ecclesiastes 6:12a).*
- *Sometimes we may face a difficult or painful situation and we may think to ourselves, "I don't need this right now," but in reality God is saying, "This is exactly what you need right now."*
- *Often, our criteria are based on whatever will make us happy, comfortable, and content. God's criteria are what will help us grow in our faith and produce eternal fruit for His glory.*
- *God is not so interested in my comfort as in my character.*
- *It is during our times of lack or need that we turn to God for Him to intervene and when He does God's glory is manifest.*
- *As we exercise our creative faith when we pray for whatever the need is whether it is healing, financial provision, or a miracle, when the answers come they reveal the Glory of His Name.*
- *When God delivered Israel out Egypt through the hand of Moses by performing signs and wonders and miracles God's Name was glorified.*

#### **Romans 9:17 NKJV**

<sup>17</sup> For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."

- *In Luke, Chapter 18 a rich ruler approached Jesus with a question that was burning in his heart. "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Verse 18b).*



- *Jesus pointed to the Law and the Commandments of Moses. The man responded by saying, "All these things I have kept from my youth."*
- *The next words that Jesus spoke to him shook him to the core and grieved him. "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich." (Verse 22b-23).*
- *One thing this rich man lacked was lack. For him to become rich in the things of God he needed to learn to be totally dependent upon Jesus Christ and not his riches.*
- *The problem wasn't that he possessed riches, it was that his riches possessed him. His wealth was his source of security and identity. Jesus wanted to fill both those positions in this man's life.*
- *To operate in Creative Faith we must come to a place of totally trusting God and being totally dependent on Him for all our provisions.*
- *While Creative Faith releases the Glory of His Name as we testify of God's faithfulness, the error that causes us to falter in Creative Faith is error of vision.*
- *Creative Faith operates when our eyes are fixed on God to provide for all our needs.*

**Psalm 123:2 NKJV**

<sup>2</sup> Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes look to the LORD our God, Until He has mercy on us.

- *Error of vision is when we look to something or someone other than God for our provision and needs to be met.*
- *Worry causes us to turn our eyes away from Jesus and to focus on our problems and look to people or other things to be our supply.*
- *Worry causes our problems or needs to become our idols.*
- *Worry distracts us from seeing Jesus and His faithfulness. Instead, we focus on our apparent lack or possible future lack. Our focus is on our needs and the uncertainties of life, and not on Jesus as our provider.*
- *An atmosphere of anticipation releases creative faith.*

- *Cares or worries hinder creative faith from operating in our hearts.*
- *Looking intently upon Jesus gives us a peace, confidence, and joy that we can fully trust Him.*