

# THE STORY OF EASTER

## Their Story

In Australia today the response from people to a question about belief in God is that 'they have no particular faith'. But the reality is people have some deep questions, that at some stage in their life they will stop long enough to seek the answers to. Questions like, "Is there more to life than this?" ie "What is the meaning of life?" or "What is my purpose for living?"

And there's one question that Jesus asks of us that makes all the difference depending on what your answer is. Jesus asks this question, "Who do you say I am?" (Mark 8:29) and the answer to that question makes all the difference in the world and beyond.

It takes faith for people to believe that Jesus is who He said He is. Jesus claimed to be God's only Son - and as such that He was and is equal with God (John 10:30-32). He said that He was the Messiah, the Saviour of the world (Matthew 3:17; Mark 9:7; John 1:14). That no-one can come to the Father other than through Him (John 14:6). To claim that He was a good man, a prophet, or a great teacher, but not equal to God is not an option that He left open to us. And if He is who He says He is, what do you do with this revelation?

Regardless of our backgrounds or educations, our social status or our talents we all can and do, express faith. Everyone places their faith in something or someone. Your faith is only as good as the object in which you place your faith (Acts 4:12).

### Observations about Faith and Belief

**OBSERVATION #1: YOU CANNOT CONJURE UP BELIEF BY WILL POWER.**

**Belief** - is a statement about something we think to be true.

**Commitment** - is a decision of the will. We choose to commit.

**OBSERVATION #2: THERE ARE TIMES WHEN A DECISION WILL REQUIRE COMMITMENT WHEN WE DON'T HAVE TOTAL CERTAINTY.**

The key decisions in life generally require 100 per cent commitment, even though we don't have 100 per cent certainty.

**OBSERVATION #3: WE CAN EXPECT THE SENSE OF CERTAINTY IN OUR BELIEFS TO EBB AND FLOW. THAT'S PART OF THE HUMAN CONDITION.**

The "leap of faith" is not that people choose to believe an impossible thing for no good reason. The "leap of faith" is a "leap", because it involves making a total commitment for good reasons—for reasons that you have thought about quite carefully—despite your fears and doubts, because there is no other way to soar, no other way to fly.

### **Mountain Top Experience (Mark 9:2-8)**

In the Scriptures, if there is an appearance of God—a theophany—a revelation where God is going to reveal His presence, it often happens on a mountain (Genesis 22; Exodus 3; 1 Kings 19:11).

We experience God on the mountain top but never get to stay on the mountain.

A mountaintop experience is that moment when you suddenly find yourself able to believe.

### **Coming Off the Mountain (Mark 9:9-13)**

Mountain top experiences boost our faith, but there's a danger that if we spend too much time on the mountain, we will come to worship the mountain where we met God instead of worshipping God. We will just want the experience, the feeling.

Jesus calls His disciples off the mountain to walk through confusion and doubt where they will have to ask questions and struggle. A place where they will have to exercise trust in Jesus. He still calls us off the mountain to follow Him in faith.

## Help My Unbelief (Mark 9:14-27)

They go down the mountain only to be confronted with a desperate father, a tormented child, and angry mob and disillusioned disciples.

Sometimes the biggest obstacles to faith in Jesus is the incompetence, complacency, and arrogance of His followers.

In desperation the father asks Jesus:

*But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us. Mark 9:22 (NIV)*

Jesus picks up on the phrase “if you can,” and we read this amazing statement that gives us hope and then slays us:

*Everything is possible for one who believes. Mark 9: 23 (NIV)*

There is a power in faith, in interacting with the reality of the Kingdom.

*I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief! Mark 9:24 (NIV)*

The boy will live. He and his father will remember the day when he was a boy and when Jesus did what nobody else could do. The day when they stood with Jesus on a mountain.

## Who Do People Say I am?

What people say about Jesus comes down to the experience on the mountain they have had with Jesus and their desire to commit to what they believe. Maybe you have doubts. Well, Jesus can handle that. The dad in this story had at least as much doubt as we do. Maybe you wonder if Jesus is really who He claimed to be. How well are you integrating your mountain top experience to bring faith into the reality of this world? Have you had a mountain top experience? And if you have, will you commit to what you believe?

*“God, I understand how much You love me. I acknowledge my sin. I confess that I have damaged other people and myself, and I have hurt You. Please forgive me for my arrogance and pride, I need you. I accept your amazing and undeserved love expressed through your sacrifice in dying for me. I surrender my life to your control; I want to make Jesus the Leader and Forgiver of my life. Please fill me with your Holy Spirit. In Jesus’ name I pray.  
Amen.*

## Discussion Questions

1. Who do your friends, neighbours and colleagues who don’t follow Jesus, say He is? Have you ever had the conversation with them about who Jesus is to you?
2. Discuss the three observations about faith, belief and commitment. Share about a time where you have had to commit to something even when your belief waned.
3. Share of a mountain top experience where it was easy to believe.
4. Read the passage from Mark 9:2-27. Which of the following statements stand out to you and why?
  - a. This is My Son, whom I love. Listen to Him! (Mark 9:7)
  - b. Everything is possible for one who believes. (Mark 9: 23)
  - c. I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief! (Mark 9:24)
5. How well are you integrating your mountain top experience to bring faith into the reality of this world? How will you commit to what you believe?