

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history there have been many examples of misjudgments. Here are seven of my favorite famous misjudgments

- (1) "Drill for oil? You mean drill into the ground and try to find oil? You're crazy."
(Hibernia Bank's response to Edwin Drake's request to borrow money to drill for oil in 1859)
- (2) "That contraption is nothing but a toy. It will never catch on." (William Orton, president of Western Union who turned down the opportunity to buy the rights to Alexander Graham Bell's telephone patent in 1876)
- (3) "I'm just glad it'll be Clark Gable falling on his face and not Gary Cooper." (Gary Cooper on his decision not to accept the leading role in *Gone with the Wind*)
- (4) "Guitar groups are on their way out." (Dick Rowe of Decca Records who turned down the Beatles after they auditioned for him in 1962)
- (5) "I think there is a world market for maybe five computers." (Thomas Watson, IBM Chairman, 1943)
- (6) "There is no reason that anyone would want a computer in their home." (Ken Olson, President, Digital Equip. Corp, 1977)
- (7) "Stick to driving a truck because you're never going to make it as a singer."
(Musician/agent Eddie Bond, who auditioned Elvis Presley in 1954)

But the greatest example of misjudgment happened in the ministry of Jesus. After His great miracle tour where He performed a quartet of amazing miracles, He returned home to Nazareth. He preached in His home synagogue.

In the early 1980s, I had the blessing of being invited back to my home church in South Alabama to preach at a homecoming service. I got to see some of the men and women who had taught me in Sunday School, choir, and R.A.s. I had been a pretty rambunctious, mischievous kid who was always getting in trouble. We didn't know the term ADD then. I was just called a little stinker. So they were all surprised and glad to see I had grown up and turned out relatively well. So my homecoming experience was wonderful.

But Jesus didn't receive that kind of reception at His homecoming. You would have imagined that Jesus would have been welcomed as a hero but instead, they treated Him like a zero.

Mark 6:1-6. Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him (The Greek word is *skandalon*. His presence stirred up a scandal). Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor." He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village."

The word "amaze" or "amazing" appears frequently in the New Testament. In every case except twice, the word is used to describe how people were amazed by the mighty works of God. Now Jesus is amazing, but I suspected that, as God, He was incapable of being amazed, that He was unamazable (if that's a word). But there are two times in the New Testament when we read that Jesus was amazed. So what Amazes Jesus? Let's see.

I. JESUS IS AMAZED BY DEAD FAITH

The Bible says, "He was amazed at their lack of faith." (Mark 6:6) The word is really unbelief I could have called this weak faith, feeble faith, fake faith, or no faith. But I've chosen to call it dead faith because that's a term that James uses in his letter. He wrote, "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." (James 2:26) There is a kind of pseudo-faith that people claim to have, but their actions don't match their words. The members of Jesus' home synagogue were afflicted with this kind of dead faith. Is your faith dead? Let's examine two characteristics of dead faith.

A. Dead faith questions the authority of Jesus

The people started asking a lot of questions about Jesus. "Where did this man get these things... isn't this the carpenter?" He should have been the object of their adoration, but instead He was the target of their accusations. Actually they asked six questions, but they never gave Jesus a chance to answer them; they weren't looking for answers, they were making accusations.

It has always been a favorite tactic of Satan to question the things of God. The devil is a crook, so he puts a crooked question mark where God has placed an exclamation point. For example, in the Garden of Eden, God had spoken clearly. He told Adam and Eve that they could eat of all the trees of the Garden, but if they ate the fruit from just one tree they would die. Period. Exclamation point. Satan slithered into Eve's presence and asked a question. He said, "Did God really say that you couldn't eat of any of the trees of the Garden?" That wasn't what God had said at all. But it got Eve to wondering and that's when Satan slipped in the lie. "You won't die. In fact, you'll be like God." There's nothing wrong with asking questions about God and the Bible; just be aware that Satan is always ready to slip in a lie to your questions.

So the members of the synagogue were scandalized that this man who had grown up in their midst claimed to be anything more than a carpenter or the son of Mary. The practical truth we gather here is that Jesus understands what it is to be rejected. You may be familiar with the pain of rejection. Maybe you auditioned for a part in a play, and you didn't get it. Rejected. I can remember submitting dozens of manuscripts to publishers and getting a rejection letter, a form letter; some of you know what that's like. Maybe you applied for a job and didn't get it. Maybe there was someone you thought you loved and might marry, but they didn't feel the same way—rejection can be painful. Maybe your spouse decided he or she didn't want to be married any longer. Jesus understands your pain. The prophet Isaiah said that Jesus would be "despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows acquainted with grief." (Isaiah 53:3)

They asked, "Isn't this the carpenter?" Now, Jesus was more than a carpenter, but He was a carpenter until age 30. That word literally means "a craftsman." It was a jack-of-all-trades who

could build or fix anything. I've known some men who were like that. They could fix anything around the house. If there's a plumbing problem, they fix it. If there's an electrical problem they fix it. If a door or window needs to be replaced, they replace it. Ladies are you married to man like that? I can see from the reaction that most of you aren't!

Jesus, the master carpenter, is still fixing things. He's fixing broken hearts, broken homes, and broken hopes. Jesus is the only person in history who claimed to be able to heal a broken heart. But for Jesus to fix your broken life, you've got to give Him all the broken pieces.

A good carpenter can look at a stack of lumber and a set of plans and he can envision the finished product. When I look at a stack of lumber, I just see splinters, bent nails, and hitting my thumb with a hammer. Jesus looks at you and me and He sees what we can become. So if you need something fixed today, the Master carpenter is taking appointments. Will you give him your broken heart? Will you offer Him your broken home, or your broken hopes? Give Him all the pieces and see what He can do.

B. Dead faith limits the flow of God's power

The Bible says, "He could not do any miracles there." Isn't the power of God unlimited? Of course. Isn't God Omnipotent—all powerful? Absolutely. So, what happened? Why couldn't He do miracles there? It was because of their lack of faith. God is omnipotent, but there is only one area in the Universe where God has voluntarily limited His omnipotence; it's in the area of your will. He won't violate your ability to choose to trust Him. God won't force His power on you. God offers you salvation, but He won't force you accept His free gift of eternal life.

These Nazareth citizens mistook that Jesus was just a carpenter. They believed He could build a table, but not raise the dead. They were too familiar with Him. Perhaps you've heard the saying, "Familiarity breeds contempt." That's not really true except in the case of contemptible people. I think it's safer to say, "Familiarity breeds indifference." They had watched Jesus grow up and there was nothing special about Him, so they couldn't accept the fact that He was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

I've been told that people who live near Niagara Falls long enough get to the point where they don't even hear the thunder of the falling water. Familiarity breeds indifference. I preached at Wayland University in Plainview, Texas a few years ago—and they have a lot of beef processing plants there. I walked outside and sniffed and wrinkled my nose. I was with a local pastor and I asked him, "Does it always smell like this here?" He said, "Smell like what?"

When it comes to the things of the Lord, we should be careful about the danger of familiarity. When was the last time you experienced the life changing power of God in your life? It's easy to get into a rut when you come to church Sunday after Sunday. You know the songs and the routine, and you just go through the entire worship service mindless of the fact that Jesus Christ is here. God's power is as great as it's always been, but if you don't have the faith to receive it, you are limiting the flow of God's power in your life.

So dead faith amazes Jesus. That's the negative aspect of this topic. But the New Testament teaches that there is something else that amazes Jesus—and this should be our goal.

II. JESUS IS AMAZED BY DYNAMIC FAITH

There's an interesting miracle that Luke and Matthew record that gives us a hint of the kind of faith that Jesus considers amazing. Let's read about it in Luke 7:1-10: When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, **HE WAS AMAZED AT HIM**, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

We don't want to be like those people in Nazareth who had a dead faith. Instead we want to be like this Roman soldier who demonstrated a dynamic faith that amazed Jesus. One reason Jesus was amazed was because this was a Gentile, a Roman soldier! He was a centurion, which meant he was a soldier responsible for roughly 100 soldiers. He understood authority. He was **IN** authority over 100 men, and He was **UNDER** the authority of his commanding officers. This Gentile soldier recognized that Jesus was under the authority of His Father in heaven, but He **HAD** authority over death and disease. All Jesus had to do was to give the command and the disease would be gone. That's living, dynamic faith.

Do you want to express this kind of faith that amazes Jesus? Here are four marks of dynamic faith.

A. Dynamic faith focuses on the needs of others

The centurion didn't selfishly ask Jesus to help him but to heal a servant whom he loved. He wasn't thinking about his own needs, but the needs of this servant. When you are consumed about things that you want, it can lead to selfishness and trouble.

Frank was 70 years old, and his wife, Betty, was also 70. They were at a friend's house celebrating Betty's 70th birthday and Frank wandered back into the home's library where there was a collection of artifacts from all over the world. Frank picked up one and rubbed it and, "Poof" a female genie appeared. She said, "Because you freed me from the lamp I will grant you one wish." Frank was pretty selfish and he started thinking about his wife, Betty. At age 70 she was getting old and cranky. Frank was thinking about how nice it would be to have a younger wife. So Frank said to the genie, "I wish I had a wife 30 years younger than me." The female

genie said, "Are you sure?" He said, "I'm sure." So she blinked her eyes, and "poof" suddenly Frank was 100 years old.

Be careful you don't become consumed with only praying for yourself. The prayer, "Bless me, bless me, bless me" may seem harmless, but the danger in it is it only focuses on your needs, not the needs of others.

B. Dynamic faith produces acts of loving-kindness

The Jewish leaders who lived in Capernaum were impressed. When they came to ask Jesus to help the centurion's servant, they mentioned two things about him: They pointed out the centurion loved the Jewish nation—that's highly unusual in itself. The common pattern was one of hostility and hatred between Jews and Roman soldiers. This centurion backed up his love for the Jews in Capernaum because we are told he built their synagogue. It doesn't mean he paid for it, because few centurions had that much money. It probably means he commanded his soldiers to work to build it. I have stood many times on the very foundation of this synagogue in Capernaum. It was a beautiful synagogue and for many years, both Christians and Jews worshiped side-by-side in the town of Capernaum. This centurion didn't perform these acts of kindness to produce his faith; it was his amazing faith that produced these acts of loving kindness.

C. Dynamic faith is expressed in humility

Notice what the Jewish leaders told Jesus about the centurion. In verse 4-5 they say, "This man deserves to have you do this because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." Then skip down and compare it to the words of the centurion himself. He said, "I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not consider myself worthy to come to you." Wow! What a picture of humility!

Sometimes we approach God with an attitude of self-worth and self-confidence bordering on cockiness. We flash Him our personal résumé and point out all our accomplishments and try to convince Him why we are so deserving of His attention and acceptance. We wonder why heaven is silent. The attitude He honors is that which says, "I am not worthy."

A group of tourists were visiting a museum in Vienna where Beethoven, the great composer, spent his last years. They came to the conservatory where his piano stood. The guide quietly said, "And here is the master's piano." A thoughtless young man pushed his way from the edge of the crowd, sat down at the bench and began to play one of Beethoven's sonatas—but he wasn't very accomplished. He paused and said to the guide, "I suppose a lot of people like me enjoy playing Beethoven's piano." The guide said, "Well, sir, the great pianist, Paderewski, was here last summer and some in his group begged him to sit and play, but his answer was, 'No, I cannot, I am not worthy to sit at the Master's piano.'" That's humility.

Brennan Manning wrote, "The Christian life is not a performance; it is a relationship. It is not about being good enough to be accepted by God. It is about being honest enough with myself and God to admit that I will never be good enough to earn God's acceptance. When I understand

that with all my failures, with all of my anger, with all of my lust, with all of my dysfunctions, with all of my stupidity, I am loved by God more than I will ever be able to comprehend, I cannot come to God wearing a mask. Humble honesty is the beginning of a great adventure with God."

D. Dynamic faith rests on the Word of God

The essence of faith is to believe God without seeing any evidence. The centurion said, "I believe you can heal my servant, just say the word!"

The centurion had such amazing faith he didn't need Jesus to come and lay hands on his servant. He didn't need Jesus to pray over him, just say the word. In Matthew's account, when Jesus saw this dynamic faith he said, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." (Matthew 8:13)

And when the Centurion returned home, he found his servant was healed.

When you read a principle or a promise in the Word of God, you must believe that God is speaking truth. We honor God by our faith and obedience. The great British pastor Charles Spurgeon wrote: "Bible promises are like checks drawn on heaven's bank that we endorse by faith and present to God for His payment."

When you go to a place of business, you use money as an exchange for goods or services. It may be cash, a check, a credit card, or in the future you'll just have your phone scanned—but money is the currency for business transactions.

In the same way, faith is the only currency accepted by God. Faith is your greatest asset and unbelief is your greatest liability. God doesn't accept logic, reason, or good works. Faith is not His preferred currency; it is the only currency accepted in heaven. Perhaps the most instructive verse in the Bible about faith is seen in Hebrews 11:6 "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

Sometimes you'll encounter someone who says, "Oh, I'm not a person of faith." Or "I just don't have any faith." That's a false claim because EVERYONE expresses faith every day.

When you eat a bite of food you're expressing faith in the farmer who produced it and the cook who prepared it. It takes faith to put something into your body and trust that it won't kill you.

When you buckle your seat belt in an airliner you're placing faith in the manufacturer of that plane, the skill of the pilot, and the law of aerodynamics. When you are driving and you see a green turn left signal on the traffic light, you're putting faith in the fact that the oncoming traffic has a red light. We all have faith; the question is what is the object of your faith?

Faith alone is not good enough. Sometimes people say, "Just have faith, everything will turn out okay." That's poor advice. Faith in faith is worthless. Your faith is only as good as the object of your faith. The centurion didn't just have faith his servant would get better; he put his faith in

Jesus. A mustard seed of faith in the right object is better than mountain of faith in the wrong thing.

The people of Nazareth had a dead faith. They doubted Jesus was the Son of God, and there were no miracles done there. The Centurion had a dynamic faith and God rewarded that faith with a miracle. When you face any challenge in life, you're going to approach it with either doubt or faith. You get to choose, will it be doubt or faith? I read a little poem recently that expresses this.

Doubt sees the obstacles; Faith sees the way; Doubt sees the darkest night; Faith sees the day.
Doubt dreads to take a step; Faith soars on high. Doubt questions, "Who believes?" Faith answers, "I!"

CONCLUSION

I want to encourage you today to place your faith in God. You can trust Him. In the 1800s, there was a preacher who lived up north. It was the middle of the winter in Minnesota and he needed to cross the frozen Mississippi River. Not knowing the thickness of the ice, he tied his horse to a tree and started walking carefully across the ice. The further he walked, the more afraid he became, as he doubted the thickness of the ice. Finally, he decided to turn around and started crawling on his hands and knees back toward the shore.

Suddenly he heard a loud noise behind him and, thinking the ice was cracking he begged God to save him. But when he finally got the nerve to look over his shoulder at the source of the noise, he saw that it was a lumberjack leading a team of horses dragging a load of heavy logs across the ice. Feeling a little foolish, the preacher jumped to his feet and claimed his horse and rode across the river. The river hadn't changed. The thickness of the ice hadn't changed, the only thing that changed was that the preacher stopped doubting the ice and started trusting it.

Whenever you worry or get afraid because of what you face in life, do you have a feeble faith that makes you crawl and doubt God? Just remember that God is trustworthy. As kids we sang a little song that said, "I am weak but He is strong." You don't have to crawl and cry; you can walk through life with full confidence that God will sustain you. That's the kind of amazing faith God rewards.

OUTLINE

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"For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." *James 2:26*

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When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." *Luke 7:9*

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- B. Dynamic faith produces acts of loving-kindness
- C. Dynamic faith is expressed in humility
- D. Dynamic faith rests on the Word of God

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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