

Does Faith Matter? Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Do you have difficulty trusting other people? Explain.
2. Did you ever have an imaginary friend as a child? Explain.

Read the following passage: Mark 9:17-27.

In our cultural context, many people dismiss the Christian faith because they don't feel any need for it. We have, it seems, plenty of other tools to help us navigate our lives. But faith in God is essential for us to come to a proper view of reality. Faith in God is crucial for addressing the anxiety we will all inevitably face. And faith in God expands our perception of what is possible. Many of us can relate to the father in Mark who exclaimed, "I do believe; help my unbelief." Jesus reassures us that faith the size of a mustard seed is enough to begin.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. What inputs are having (or have had) significant influence on your view of reality? How do you think your view of reality might differ if you grew up in a different family, different nation, or different moment in history? Are there any ways in which your view of reality has been changing recently? Explain.
2. In your day-to-day life, how regularly do you think about the possibility that spiritual influences (including God, angels, and demons) may be affecting your thoughts and experiences? Do you think you are too quick to assign spiritual causes to experiences or too hesitant? Explain.
3. Most biblical scholars do not think we should adopt every element of the ancient worldview (or worldviews) expressed in the Bible. We have, after all, learned a lot about science, medicine, and psychology over the last few thousand years. That being said, what are some elements of biblical teaching concerning God, human beings, and the world that you think are particularly relevant to our current cultural context?
4. How can our culture's obsession with individualism lead to anxiety? Have you experienced this in your life?
5. When you are fearful or anxious, what "substitute saviors" are you most likely to turn to? What are some more helpful ways we can address our fear and anxiety?

6. The father who came to Jesus was honest about his struggle to believe Jesus's words. Overall, how would you rate your current level of confidence in Jesus? Do you have hope and expectation that he will act powerfully on your behalf? Explain.
7. What are some practical ways we can grow our confidence in Jesus?

Pray