

Hold Fast - May 10th - Billboard Jesus Part 2 - Clay Weed

TALK IT OVER

Key Scriptures:

2 Peter 1:16-18 NLT
Matthew 17:1-8, NLT
2 Peter 1:19-21 NLT
Matthew 22:36-40 NIV
John 20:24-29 NIV
Hebrews 11:1 NLT
2 Corinthians 5:7 NLT

Start reading

2 Peter 1:16-18 NLT

For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.

2 Peter 1:19-21 NLT

Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts. Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.

John 20:24-29 NIV

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them.

Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- What is something you have done that required much faith? How did it change you?

Start thinking. Ask a question to get your group thinking.

- Read 2 Peter 1:16-18 and Matthew 17:1-8. At the Transfiguration of Jesus, Peter wanted to set up 3 memorials. While he was talking about doing that, God spoke from heaven. He said, "Listen to Him". What did Clay say was the significance of this moment? Do you feel there are things/people in your life that you put on a pedestal that doesn't belong to them?
- How do you draw the line between placing a mentor on a pedestal and simply valuing his/her example? What are some guardrails that you have employed to prevent putting them on a pedestal?
- God spoke directly to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration and scared the daylighters out of them. How does God speak to people today? How has He spoken to you? What are you doing to nurture that relationship and encourage its growth? How can you use that to encourage others, both those who have a relationship with Jesus and those who don't?
- Read 2 Peter 1:19-21. How much of your UNDERSTANDING of scripture do you think comes from your efforts or initiative in studying? What part do you think the Holy Spirit plays in your understanding? How do you know that? As billboards, we are essentially messengers spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. What part does the Spirit play in that role in your life?

Start sharing. Choose a question to create openness.

- Read John 20:24-29. Jesus told Thomas, Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Jesus was referring to us! How does that encourage you?
- What does your everyday walk by faith look like? How can your faith, which is not a product of having physically walked with, seen, and heard Jesus during His time on earth, be an example to unbelievers?
- Faith is believing in something you cannot see. What would you say to someone who struggles with accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior because they've never seen Him?

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Commit to living out these statements:
 - I will go to my grave reminding people how awesome my Jesus is!
 - I'm glad to advertise Jesus!
 - I'm honored to live for Him and help others do the same thing!
 - I want to represent Him well!

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- Father, please help strengthen my faith in You, so I can share my faith with others. Help me to be a walking advertisement for You and to represent You well. In Jesus Name. Amen.

Start digging. For further study.

- Read the article on the 2nd page and discuss it.

Question: "What does the Bible say about faith?"

Answer: Hebrews 11:1 tells us that faith is “being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” Perhaps no other component of the Christian life is more important than faith. We cannot purchase it, sell it or give it to our friends. So what is faith and what role does faith play in the Christian life? The dictionary defines faith as “belief in, devotion to, or trust in somebody or something, especially without logical proof.” It also defines faith as “belief in and devotion to God.” The Bible has much more to say about faith and how important it is. In fact, it is so important that, without faith, we have no place with God, and it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6). According to the Bible, faith is belief in the one, true God without actually seeing Him.

Where does faith come from? Faith is not something we conjure up on our own, nor is it something we are born with, nor is faith a result of diligence in study or pursuit of the spiritual. Ephesians 2:8-9 makes it clear that faith is a gift from God, not because we deserve it, have earned it, or are worthy to have it. It is not from ourselves; it is from God. It is not obtained by our power or our free will. Faith is simply given to us by God, along with His grace and mercy, according to His holy plan and purpose, and because of that, He gets all the glory.

Why have faith? God designed a way to distinguish between those who belong to Him and those who don't, and it is called faith. Very simply, we need faith to please God. God tells us that it pleases Him that we believe in Him even though we cannot see Him. A key part of Hebrews 11:6 tells us that “he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” This is not to say that we have faith in God just to get something from Him. However, God loves to bless those who are obedient and faithful. We see a perfect example of this in Luke 7:50. Jesus is engaged in dialog with a sinful woman when He gives us a glimpse of why faith is so rewarding. “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” The woman believed in Jesus Christ by faith, and He rewarded her for it. Finally, faith is what sustains us to the end, knowing that by faith we will be in heaven with God for all eternity. “Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8-9).

Examples of faith. Hebrews chapter 11 is known as the “faith chapter” because in it great deeds of faith are described. By faith Abel offered a pleasing sacrifice to the Lord (v. 4); by faith Noah prepared the ark in a time when rain was unknown (v. 7); by faith Abraham left his home and obeyed God's command to go he knew not where, then willingly offered up his only son (vv. 8-10, 17); by faith Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt (vv. 23-29); by faith Rahab received the spies of Israel and saved her life (v. 31). Many more heroes of the faith are mentioned “who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies” (vv. 33-34). Clearly, the existence of faith is demonstrated by action.

According to the Bible, faith is essential to Christianity. Without demonstrating faith and trust in God, we have no place with Him. We believe in God's existence by faith. Most people have a vague, disjointed notion of who God is but lack the reverence necessary for His exalted position in their lives. These people lack the true faith needed to have an eternal relationship with the God who loves them. Our faith can falter at times, but because it is the gift of God, given to His children, He provides times of trial and testing in order to prove that our faith is real and to sharpen and strengthen it. This is why James tells us to consider it “pure joy” when we fall into trials, because the testing of our faith produces perseverance and matures us, providing the evidence that our faith is real (James 1:2-4).