

## Jesus Can Still Do This



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Are you facing a crisis that has driven you to your knees? Maybe you need physical healing. Perhaps you're in financial turmoil. Your marriage might be on the brink. Has your trial continued for so long that your spirit has sunk into despondency?

Multitudes of Christians face excruciating situations beyond their control and now things seem hopeless. They've exhausted all their resources and emotions trying to remedy their crisis to no avail. They've pressed forward believing God will meet their need, but their situation has gone from bad to worse. The more they pray, the further away God seems. Now they no longer think he cares.

If this describes you, I want to encourage you: Do not give up — Jesus is near to you. He desires not only to meet your need but to give you a breakthrough of faith. No matter how desperate your circumstance, he wants to infuse your spirit with this truth: "Jesus can still do this."

A scene in Mark's gospel addresses four types of fires that can confront our faith. The first is when sudden calamity falls on us. The second is when our trial has lasted a long time with no end in sight. The third is when our circumstances grow continually worse. And the fourth is when we stop believing altogether.

### 1. Jesus can do this.

Jairus was a devoted God-fearer in an immediate crisis. "A leader of the local synagogue, whose name was Jairus, arrived. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet, pleading fervently with him. 'My little daughter is dying,' he said. 'Please come and lay your hands on her; heal her so she can live'" (Mark 5:22-23).

We can imagine Jairus' desperation. His young daughter was sick to the point of death. When he learned that Jesus the healer was nearby, he decided, "I'll put my faith in him." He ran to the Messiah, fell on his face and begged for a miracle: "Lord, unless you do this, I have no hope. Doctors can't help me. You have to make my miracle happen."

Note the exact phrase Jairus uses in the verse above: "...so she can live" (5:23). The word "can" denotes Jairus' faith in Christ's ability. He believed the Lord for the impossible, declaring, "Jesus, you can." He knew that if Christ would just touch his daughter, she would be healed.

### 2. Jesus will do this.

What happens next reveals yet another level of faith. "Jesus went with (Jairus), and all the people followed. A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding. She had suffered a great deal from many doctors, and over the years she had spent everything she had to pay them, but she had gotten no better. In fact, she had gotten worse" (5:24-26).

Consider this woman's desperate situation. Over time her bleeding condition had gone from bad to worse. Yet when she heard that Jesus was passing by, "She thought to herself, 'If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed'" (5:28).

Hidden in her heart was a mustard seed of faith — the kind that grows into a large, fruitful plant. This woman's faith was so strong she didn't need Jesus to come to her; all she needed was to reach out and touch him. Note the last phrase in her thinking: "...I will be healed" (5:28). She didn't just think, "Jesus can do this if he wills." She was convinced, "This is going to happen because he is God." It was rock-solid, concrete faith — the kind that believes God for miracles based on his goodness.

This woman's condition mirrors that of many Christians today. For some struggling couples, it is not enough to believe, "This marriage can still work." They need a faith that says, "Despite everything, God will make this work." The same is true for many in health crises. It's not enough for them to say, "God can deliver me," but, "God will deliver me."

Imagine what this woman's condition had done to her life. Over twelve years she had gone from weak to frail to feeble. Maybe that describes your life. Problems have multiplied, bills have piled up and your worries are increasing. You've seen other people's prayers answered, but yours seem to fall on deaf ears. Now your heart's cry is, "How long, Lord? Why should I continue hoping you'll hear me?"

I love the bleeding woman's faith. She had no reason to believe for anything because nothing had worked for her. Yet she reached out to Jesus with believing faith: "I will either die of this, or my healing will come today." Her faith was not simply "Jesus can" but "Jesus will."

I encountered this kind of faith on a trip to Brazil. I asked a local pastor to take me on a tour through an impoverished community to see how World Challenge might help with some of the needs. Brazil's favelas are the equivalent of America's most desperate urban ghettos, only worse — much worse. There is no electricity or running water. The streets function as sewers, flowing with human waste. Homeless orphans roam looking for food and shelter. The favelas have no governing bodies or police and instead are run by drug lords.

The pastor who took me to the favela was a former drug addict. He wanted me to meet the faithful elderly woman who had led him to Christ. She was over one hundred years old and still lived in a humble shack. Years earlier she had evangelized the young man, telling him day after day, "There is hope for you. Jesus will change your life."

As the pastor introduced me to this saintly woman, she immediately began praying: "God, you have brought this man to me. I have prayed to you since I was eighteen years old, interceding for this community, where gangs and drug lords continue to kill. But now I can go home to you because you have sent this man to care for our community."

Gripping my hands, she then prayed for what our ministry would do — start a school, an orphanage, a medical clinic, a feeding program — all of which we were enabled to do. It happened because she prayed in faith, "Lord, you will" — and the force of her faith fueled my own. I began trusting God to bring all of these things to pass through our ministry.

Don't misunderstand: This woman's faith was not the name-it-and-claim-it kind. Her prayer wasn't based on some wish or whim, but on a desire that had been sown in her heart by the Holy Spirit. It was in agreement with God's own desire to bring about his kingdom on earth.

I believe the bleeding woman in Mark's gospel had the same faith. As she touched Jesus' garment, "Immediately the bleeding stopped, and she could feel in her body that she had been healed of her terrible condition. Jesus realized at once that healing power had gone out from him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my robe?'" (5:29-30).

Notice that Jesus did not initiate this healing. The woman's faith did. Jesus himself said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over" (5:34). Her faith was based on God's goodness. She declared, "Lord, even if you have forgotten my need, I have not forgotten your faithfulness." Her story is meant to tell us we can have the same kind of faith— the kind that says, "Lord, you will."

3. The third kind of faith addressed in this passage is the most difficult kind to have.

"While he was still speaking to her, messengers arrived from the home of Jairus, the leader of the synagogue. They told him, 'Your daughter is dead'" (Mark 5:35).

This news must have struck Jairus' heart like a knife. He had just heard Jesus tell the bleeding woman that her suffering was over. Now Jairus was being told that his suffering had only begun. I picture this godly man thinking, "My faith wasn't strong enough, like that woman's was. It's my lack of faith that allowed my daughter to die."

There is an important message contained in this passage for everyone whose situation has fallen apart completely. Maybe your healing didn't happen or your marriage has ended. Maybe that lost loved one never came to Jesus. We simply don't understand why God allows some tragedies to happen.

We might react by questioning or even blaming God. I can picture Jairus thinking, "If Jesus hadn't stopped to talk to that woman, we might have gotten to my house on time." How many times have you wondered in the midst of your trial, "If only...?"

At such times, some Christians are tempted to give up believing God will answer any of their prayers. Think of Jairus: Why should he have had faith at that point? Someone had just said to him: "Your daughter is dead. There's no use troubling the Teacher now" (5:35).

The kind of faith Jesus calls for in this scene is the most difficult kind to have. Every circumstance tells us it's too late for God to intervene. Therefore, we might as well stop praying.

Yet Jesus is looking for a very particular faith in this kind of circumstance. It's a faith that says, "Yes, my situation is past all hope. *But Jesus can still do this.*" This is the kind of faith that was required of Abraham. His son Isaac was already considered dead when Abraham raised a knife to slay him in obedience to the Lord. Yet just when the promises of God seemed not to be true, the Almighty intervened.

That's exactly the way Jesus intervened for Jairus. He told him, "Don't be afraid. Just have faith" (5:36). I don't believe Christ was requiring faith of Jairus here, as much as he was speaking faith into him. Just as the Lord said at the Creation, "Let there be light," so he said to Jairus here, "Let there be faith."

Friend, if Jesus were to speak audibly to you today, I believe he would say the same about your situation: "Just have faith." He is breathing his living word into your heart, creating faith in you. He knows you are beyond your wits, beyond all your own strength and abilities. And now he is prophesying over you, saying, "Just have faith for your marriage, for your children, for your physical affliction, for your finances, for your work in ministry — for every area of life that has gotten worse, not better, and that even now lies on its deathbed."

We know the rest of Jairus' story. Jesus told the entire household, "Why all this commotion and weeping? The child isn't dead; she's only asleep" (5:39). Your situation may look like it's beyond hope, too — but it isn't to Jesus. He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, and he is ready to step into your situation with the same resurrection power.

4. The last kind of faith that Jesus addresses is when we abandon faith altogether.

In the very next chapter, Jesus goes to a certain town where he encounters outright unbelief. I have always been astonished by the following verse: "Because of their unbelief, he couldn't do any miracles among them except to place his hands on a few sick people and heal them" (Mark 6:5).

This verse blows my theology out of the water. How can a sovereign God have his hands tied by human beings' unbelief? The truth is Jesus was sending a message to that town, saying in essence, "Sorry, guys. Others have such faith that they'll cut a hole in their roof to lower a sick man so I can heal him. You don't even believe I can heal."

The passage ends with this incredible statement: "He was amazed at their unbelief" (6:6). Let this be a caution. May you not leave off reading this message with any unbelief in your heart.

Of course, there are times in our lives when God may choose to act in a way contrary to our desires. We pray, we plead, we believe for the Lord to intervene — and he simply goes in another direction. But that doesn't mean God wants us to abandon faith, never asking, never hoping, living without desires.

Do you still believe Jesus can? Do you believe he will? No matter what your trial, no matter how far beyond hope it

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seems, he is ready to intervene. Ask him to breathe faith into you.

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