

EXPECTANT FAITH

Leader pages on pp. 144-147

THE POINT:
FAITH MAINTAINS TRUST
IN GOD TO DO WHAT NO
ONE ELSE CAN DO.

LUKE 8:41-42,49-56

⁴¹ Just then, a man named Jairus came. He was a leader of the synagogue. He fell down at Jesus's feet and pleaded with him to come to his house,

⁴² because he had an only daughter about twelve years old, and she was dying. While he was going, the crowds were nearly crushing him. . . .

⁴⁹ While he was still speaking, someone came from the synagogue leader's house and said, "Your daughter is dead. Don't bother the teacher anymore."

⁵⁰ **When Jesus heard it, he answered him, "Don't be afraid. Only believe, and she will be saved."**

⁵¹ After he came to the house, he let no one enter with him except Peter, John, James, and the child's father and mother.

⁵² Everyone was crying and mourning for her. But he said, "Stop crying, because she is not dead but asleep."

⁵³ They laughed at him, because they knew she was dead.

⁵⁴ So he took her by the hand and called out, "Child, get up!"

⁵⁵ Her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Then he gave orders that she be given something to eat.

⁵⁶ Her parents were astounded, but he instructed them to tell no one what had happened.

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MEMORY VERSE

KEYWORDS

Jairus (v. 41)—This name is the Greek form of the Hebrew personal name "Jair," meaning "Jah (shortened form of Yahweh) will enlighten."

Teacher (v. 49)—Our word *didactic* is related to this Greek word. The title often appears in the New Testament as a term of address for Christ.

HOW CAN WE MAINTAIN AN EXPECTANT FAITH IN GOD?

What makes great fiction? I think we'd all agree that having last-minute rescues and unexpected twists make for a great page-turner. We love to read stories of flawed heroes who swoop in to save the day and vanquish the enemy. Something in our soul longs for those stories, but the thing about the Gospel is this: it's a true story of the perfect Hero that goes even further than fiction.

We read stories where the last minute passes, however, there are no last minutes with Jesus. His timing is perfect even when it seems like He steps in too late. These are the stories that bolster our faith during difficult seasons. It gives us hope even in the darkest nights that the story isn't over. Jesus isn't done with the story, including yours. In fact, He's just warming up the victory band! This week's story provides a perfect example of expectant faith. All we see is a final period; Jesus transforms it into a semi-colon.

Expectantly Approach Jesus // Luke 8:41-42

Jesus always seems to be moved by our desperation. Desperation causes everything else to fall into the background as we face our worst fears and our greatest needs. Jairus, a leader in

the synagogue, learned this lesson well. Before his great sadness took over, Jairus would have viewed Jesus as a blasphemer and a heretic. Yet his desperation pulled him toward Jesus. As a ruler of the synagogue, he would administrate the order of the service and determine who would read scripture and deliver a message. He was chosen by his peers, so we can assume that he enjoyed popularity in his town. All of these accomplishments and the favor of friends faded into the background.

When you experience a devastating blow, things that once seemed important lose their shine. You recalibrate values and assumptions. It alters us. I'm sure you've heard of people who experienced great success and wealth say that they would give it all back if they could save their son from leukemia, see their daughter go into treatment, or rebuild their marriage that died. C.S. Lewis wrote in *The Problem of Pain*: "Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."¹⁵

Seeing his daughter on the brink of death catapulted Jairus into a different orbit. His theology seemed senseless as he tried to square



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it with life experience. He did what any good father would do. He abandoned his prejudice, his pride, and his precepts for the hope that Jesus was who He said He was.

WHAT MIGHT KEEP US FROM BRINGING OUR NEEDS TO JESUS?

We could never love our children as much as Jesus loves them. Perhaps, Jairus felt that same divine love as he plead for Jesus's help. Desperate times call for desperate measures; it's true. We see him as a desperate man who pivoted toward the sovereignty and power of a living God. He had that kind of faith that is birthed through desperation. If we live expectantly looking for the hand of Jesus, He won't deny us or desert us.

Expectantly Maintain Hope // Luke 8:49-53

Our experiences here on earth bring us to the place where we accept certain rules as given. We know the sun sets in the west; it rises in the east. We understand that sooner or later we all experience adversity and struggle. In our finite minds, we understand that death is a certainty. I've never been to a funeral where the dead stepped out of the coffin. Yet when it comes to the laws of the universe, Jesus can rewrite the rules. He has that sovereign and divine prerogative. Look at this chaotic scene. Professional mourners line the path to the house of Jairus. Disrespected synagogue leaders received word that it was too late. His only child was dead. Jesus doesn't wait for any response from Jairus; he simply says: "Don't be afraid, only believe!" Jesus commands the mourners, "Stop crying. She is only sleeping." This sad lot of mourners responded in laughter. They had no idea of the power of Jesus. In their own minds, they had lived long enough to know the rules. They had experienced this scene over and over throughout their lives. People die. We mourn. End of story. Full stop. They couldn't begin to imagine the power of the Almighty: Jesus of Nazareth.

WHEN HAVE YOU SEEN OR HEARD GOD WORK IN A SITUATION THAT SEEMED HOPELESS?

Jairus risks a whole lot by granting access to his pain. He would probably lose his standing, his reputation, and his pride, but he wouldn't lose his little girl. Like this girl, Jesus was an only child. He was the one and only Son of God. He knew the great sacrifice Father God was taking to bring him to this village drenched in chaos, grief, and uncertainty.

We've all struggled with death. If it's not the death of a child, it may be a death of a dream, a relationship, or a destiny. The question of Langston Hughes resonates with me. What happens to a dream deferred? Isn't it great to know that death is not a hard boundary.



DIGGING DEEPER FAITH OF A PARENT

There are five recorded accounts of Jesus healing children during his three-year ministry, including the one mentioned here in Luke 8. In John 4:43-54, a royal official pleads with Jesus to heal his son. In Luke 7:11-17, Jesus raised a widow's son from the dead; in Matthew 15:21-28, a Canaanite mother fell at Jesus's knees pleading for her daughter to be freed from the torment of demons. In verse 28, Jesus responded, "Woman, your faith is great. Let it be done for you as you want." Lastly, in Matthew 17:14-20, a father knelt before Jesus and asked him to have mercy on his son and heal him of an unclean spirit. In four of the five accounts, we find parents with unwavering faith, who are pleading, believing, and anticipating the healing power of Jesus Christ.

What can you learn from these parents, and when is the last time you've exhibited expectant faith?

It's not something that looms over Almighty God like an impenetrable wall. We often measure the power of God by our own human bandwidth. In this day in the life of Jesus, we see a searching Savior who has the ability to handle cascading crises.

In the middle of a mission to save a little girl, a woman who had been rejected and deflected by her peers, will reach out to touch Jesus. All of this is happening at the same time. The great thing about Jesus is that His shoulders are broad.

This desperate, sick, bankrupt woman learned this as she fought her way through the crowd to touch Jesus's cloak. As soon as she touched Him, He knew it and focused all his attention on her. In one moment, we can agree on several things about Jesus: He's never too late, He's never too busy, and He's never too burdened to step into the pain of our desperation. Sometimes, He must bring us into desperation for us to diligently seek Him. That's the whole point of this life, and yet we are often



too consumed with the crowd, the cash, and the climate to really stop and focus on our ultimate and preeminent King. All of this happened as a subplot to the events that took place in Jairus's life. It serves as a reminder that Jesus can do more than two things at once, a lot more.

As Jesus approached the house of Jairus, the mourners laughed. The word Luke uses for laughter connotes a derisive laughter. It's the kind of laughter that communicates, Are you out of your

mind? It was the perfect time for Jesus to show up. He loves impossible circumstances. It's His specialty.

WHAT HABITS CAN HELP US CONTINUE TO TRUST JESUS WHEN THINGS GO AWRY?

Expectantly Know God Is Able

// Luke 8:54-56

Jesus calls out in Aramaic, "*Talitha cumi*," two words meaning "*Little lamb arise!*" These words reflect the power and authority of Christ. His power is not in the volume of the words that He speaks.

Peace be still.

Take up your bed and walk.

Your sins are forgiven.

His authority expels doubters and brings breath to lifeless children.

There's even more mystery in this story. After the miracle, Jesus tells the family to keep silent about what has happened. Jesus is different from the so-called faith healers of our day. They wish to perform their wonders before applauding multitudes. Jesus knew that a faith born of miracles is temporal. It's so much easier to captivate an audience with the miraculous than it is to implore people to follow with an expectant faith. Some people who encounter the miraculous hand of God in their lives spend the rest of their time chasing after that experience rather than the Miracle Worker himself.

As followers of Christ, we must ask ourselves some very critical questions:

- **Will we trust him even at times when it seems He is late?**
- **Will we listen to the mockers more than we listen to the Master?**
- **Who will we allow into the inner corridors of pain and despair.**

There's nothing sweeter than a breakthrough! He restores our hope and brings us into the daylight from the dank cave of disconnection.

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It's interesting to note that Jesus immediately commanded the parents to give the newly resurrected girl something to eat. In a metaphorical sense, every new life needs to immediately break the fast. The most important thing that we can do for people who find faith in Christ is to immediately feed them with the Word. We can't just chalk up another victory on the slate of our church records. We must have a plan to feed new disciples with scripture.

So, as we take the wide view of expectant faith, I must ask you this question: Where do you find yourself in this story? Maybe you are like the mocking mourners, skeptical of the divine because of your life experience. Perhaps you roll your eyes and wonder if people really change. Maybe you are like the three disciples in that room where glory happens, and you are reveling in God's grace today. Maybe, just maybe, your spirit is as lifeless as the little girl in this story. The good news is that God isn't done. He transforms us all if we have expectant faith.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN OUR FAITH AND GOD'S PROVISION?

DID YOU KNOW?

Each year Hollywood sets aside a night to honor the best in the film and motion picture industry. Originating in 1929, The Academy Award or the full title, The Academy Award of Merit recognizes individuals from 24 categories that include best picture, actor, and actress. The recipients are presented with a gold-plated statuette called the Oscar, which affectionately is the by name of this annual ceremony. Celebrities, paparazzi, and "who's who" in the film industry attend this anticipated celebration anxiously awaiting the announcement of the winners. The event is highly publicized in the media, and news articles that include statements like the following can be found: "as expected (name of honoree) . . . was a big winner" and "his win, among the most expected."

Biblical Truth: As Christians, our hope should solely rest in God alone (Ps. 62:5).

As Christians, are you on the edge of your seats waiting in anticipation for what Jesus Christ has in store for you? Are you ready to celebrate?

LIVE IT

How can you live a life that exemplifies expectant faith and impacts others?

Jesus came so that we can live life with a zealous, expectant faith. It's the kind of faith that causes us to rise in anticipation each morning asking God, "What's next?" To cultivate this kind of faith, we must remain in constant communication with God, hide the Word in our hearts and do what we believe.

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- **Pray.** Ask God to reveal the people in your life who need a spiritual resurrection. Pray for spiritual awakening and the courage to speak into their lives.
- **Memorize.** As you reflect on this amazing story, let its meaning sink in by memorizing this promise from Jesus. "A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance (John 10:10)."
- **Go.** Sometime in the next week or so, get out of the safety zone of your ordinary life and visit a jail, homeless shelter, or compassion ministry site. Volunteer to help, and as you do, pray that God will once again show off his power in the lives of the people you encounter.

DAILY READINGS

1. FAITH THAT WAITS // MARK 11:24

Faith is tried most when discouraged by a delay. However, when we decide to remain in faith, this is the moment in which we grow spiritually by leaps and bounds. Faith grows when it is exercised similar to a bodily muscle. Muscles grow when pressure or weight is applied. The weight of the trials and delays we all experience in life, in route to promises fulfilled, is what causes our faith to grow and sustain us through difficult times. Delays are not denials; they are catalysts that push us to another realm of knowing God. While this process can be painful, its temporary inconvenience is worth an eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17). Keep believing and you will receive.

The benefits of trusting God will always outweigh the costs.

2. ABIDING FAITH // JOHN 15:7

God's Word is most effective when we actively do what it says. To abide in God's Word as mentioned in John 15:7 means to remain. God allows trials into our lives to make us steadfast and unmovable, always abounding or excelling beyond average in the work of the Lord. Part of the work God has called us to is to trust and believe in Him despite what our physical senses perceive. When we do so God grants us the high privilege of experiencing the miraculous, the extraordinary, and uncommon encounters with Him reserved solely for those who truly trust Him. When we abide in Him, we expectantly maintain hope in Him and God in turn is free to be God in our lives on a level beyond human capabilities.

Abiding in Him invites the supernatural power of God.

3. PRAYING FOR GOD'S WILL // 1 JOHN 5:14

The Bible is Holy because it is a depiction of God's Will for humanity and all of creation. It is wholly authoritative and is intended to serve humanity as a guide for life. God holds His Word

in high distinction as it represents His character and all that He is. When we approach Him with it, He is careful to bring it to pass just as he promised. God's Word is exhaustive beyond our comprehension. In it contains all that we could ever need and want in this life. When we do not ask according to His Word, His Will, we ask amiss according to our own desires which are more harmful than helpful. God's Word will always meet our needs far beyond our desires.

God is merciful to deny us our own desires.

4. PRAYING IN FAITH // 1 THESSALONIANS 5:17

Expectant faith causes us to pray without ceasing because we truly believe that God manifesting His promise is only a matter of time and the appropriate season. Everything under the sun has a time and a season (Ecc. 3:1) so when God says its time and the season has arrived, nothing can prevent what He promised from happening because God is sovereign. What He says is final. God desires that we pray without ceasing not to put pressure on Him, but to mature our faith and trust in Him. God has already provided all that we will ever need in this life (2 Pet. 1:3). We need only to believe (Mk. 5:36).

Praying persistently builds our faith in God.

5. GOD PROVIDES // PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

A life without expectant faith in God is a life rooted in vanity and worry. It is a self-dependent life. No amount of money, fame, or fortune can prepare us for the types of traumatizing storms that are possible in this life. No matter how much material wealth or notoriety God may allow us to experience in this life, it will never be sufficient to pay our sin debt. Only the blood of Jesus offers satisfactory payment for our sins therefore only Christ our Savior is able to truly provide for us. It is to our benefit to be anxious for nothing and deciding to trust Him for everything.

Expectant faith invites abundant provision.