

How can I increase my faith? *John 20:19-31*

When I first passed my driving test I soon realised I had to keep an eye on the fuel gauge. Often it got dangerously low and on several occasions I ran out of petrol completely. Once that happened I could go nowhere. Sometimes we resorted to getting out and pushing!

In our spiritual lives we have to keep an eye on the level of our faith. The Bible repeatedly tells us that we should “live by faith” and also that “without faith it is impossible to please God.” So what is the level of our faith this morning? We need faith if we want to go anywhere spiritually. Without faith we can find ourselves “getting out and pushing!”

Throughout the gospels Jesus is looking for faith. To some he says “Where is your faith?” To others “Why have you no faith?” In another place “O you of little faith.” The good news is that we can increase our faith. Those who have no faith can find faith. Those who have little faith can have more faith. Those who have more faith can be full of faith. Paul said of the Thessalonians “your faith is growing more and more.” (2 Thess 1:3)

In today's gospel reading we see a miraculous transformation. Doubting Thomas changes to a believing Thomas, full of faith and worshipping the risen Jesus. If we look carefully at this passage we can see three ways in which we can all increase our faith.

First, we can read the book of faith.

John 20:31 These things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God. In another place John tells us that that he is an eyewitness who has seen, heard and touched the Lord Jesus (1 John 1:1). Peter also says “We were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” (1 Peter 1:16). Luke went around collecting eyewitness accounts (Luke 1:2). David Kossof called his collection of Bible stories “The Book of Witnesses.”

Some people think that faith is a leap in the dark. Nothing could be further from the truth. Faith is not a leap in the dark, but a step forward into the light, based on clear evidence: the evidence of eyewitnesses in the book of faith.

Reading and listening to these eyewitness accounts will build our faith because “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.” Rom 10:17. Hearing the Bible read each Sunday is a wonderful start, but if we want to have more faith we should try to read the Bible as often as possible - every day is the ideal.

Second, we can meet with the people of faith.

John 20:24 Thomas was not with them... The problem for Doubting Thomas was that he was missing when Jesus first appeared to the disciples. Some people think you can be a Christian without “going to church” but this is no good if you want to increase your faith. Jesus said “Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them” (Matt 18:20). In the book of Hebrews we are warned “Do not give up meeting together as some people do, but encourage one another... motivate one another” (Heb 10:25).

The gathering together of believers is like a fire that is burning brightly. All the time the coals or logs are gathered together they generate more heat. If one falls away it quickly loses its heat and becomes cold and dead.

Third, we can receive the Spirit of faith.

John 20:22 He breathed on them and said “Receive the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is a wonderful gift sent by the Lord Jesus to live within his people. The Spirit brings us new life, peace in our hearts, joy and happiness in living, but also the Spirit builds up our faith. Paul says that we have “the same Spirit of faith” (2 Cor 4:13).

Jesus reminds us that as parents we want to give good gifts to our children. In the same way our Heavenly Father wants to give good gifts to us. This includes the gift of faith. “Ask and it will be given to you.”

In our family we have a custom on birthdays. We ask the person to close their eyes and hold out their hands ready to receive the present. There are many ways to receive God’s Holy Spirit, but this is one of them. Let us do it right now...