

## Seeing is believing

Too often, we need to see something to believe it. We might acknowledge that something can happen or exist even if we don't see it, but when we do see it, that's when we really believe it to be true. An example of this is the idea of an optical illusion. Let's say that I saw a great optical illusion and I told you all about it. "There is this great optical illusion. It's a duck but if you stare at it, it changes to a rabbit!" or "I saw this optical illusion and it a bunch of black boxes with white dots between them, but every time you try to look at the dots they change colors and disappear!" You might believe there is such a thing. You might even think it's pretty cool. But until you see it, you won't really get it or understand what I'm talking about. Just to prove it, here are the illusions.

You see how that works. We are a people who need to see to believe. Jesus knew that. He spent years trying to show people that their faith would be rewarded, especially when that faith went past what they could see.

Mark 5:24-34 A large crowd followed and pressed around him.<sup>25</sup> And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years.<sup>26</sup> She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse.<sup>27</sup> When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak,<sup>28</sup> because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed."<sup>29</sup> Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

<sup>30</sup>At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

<sup>31</sup>"You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"

<sup>32</sup>But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it.<sup>33</sup> Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.<sup>34</sup> He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

The woman was afraid, but she had great faith. She knew if she could just touch the cloak of Jesus, she would be healed. She didn't think she needed to speak to Jesus or have Jesus do something for her. She had faith that Jesus could heal her regardless of these things.

Luke 7:1-10 <sup>1</sup>When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup>There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. <sup>3</sup>The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. <sup>4</sup>When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this," <sup>5</sup>because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." <sup>6</sup>So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. <sup>7</sup>That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant

will be healed. <sup>8</sup>For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

<sup>9</sup>When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." <sup>10</sup>Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

This time a centurion shows great faith in Jesus. He recognizes that Jesus only need say the word and his servant would be healed. Jesus sees the faith that this man has and exclaims that he has not seen this kind of faith in all of Israel. Both of these people had real faith. Their faith wasn't about what they could see. It was about what they knew about Jesus. It was about what they knew Jesus could do for them. They had a true faith – believing without seeing.

A final example for today regarding faith in Jesus occurs at the end of the Gospel of John

John 20:26-29 <sup>26</sup>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!" <sup>27</sup>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."

<sup>28</sup>Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

<sup>29</sup>Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Here we see the opposite. One of Jesus' own disciples doesn't quite get it. He should be jumping up and down for joy at the words of his fellow disciples, but instead doesn't believe until he sees with his own eyes. Jesus comes back so that Thomas can see for himself and Thomas then recognizes his mistake and bows down in worship. But Jesus responds that it's easy to believe when you see, but blessed are those who believe even though they don't see. Blessed are those like the woman and the centurion who believed before they knew, before they saw. They believed without seeing and they were blessed with healing and knowledge.

We all have the opportunity to believe. We may not all have seen, but we all can know without seeing. And in some cases, we can see and still not believe. We can do that because we have already had our own set outcome in our minds. Our preconceptions cause us to see what we want to see and not necessarily the truth. This is why there are always several accounts when more than one person sees an accident or an incident. These witnesses will see what they expected to see based on their own experiences and prejudices. Jesus experienced this when he healed a blind man.

John 9:35-41 <sup>35</sup>Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

<sup>36</sup>"Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."

<sup>37</sup>Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."

<sup>38</sup>Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

<sup>39</sup>Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."

<sup>40</sup>Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?"

<sup>41</sup>Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."

The Pharisees saw but they did not believe. They were witnesses to several of Jesus' miracles. But instead of recognizing who Jesus was and what he was doing, they chose to see a sinner breaking the Sabbath laws. Their preconceptions and prejudices did not allow them to see the truth. Jesus said that they were blind because they saw and yet did not believe. He says that if they had not seen, they wouldn't be guilty of sin, but because they did see, they were guilty.

As someone once said, believing is seeing. We can see something and still not believe it because of our prejudices. But if we believe something, we don't even have to see it and we have faith it will occur. This is the place we find ourselves today, as Christians. We didn't see what Jesus did, but we see the evidence and we believe. Jesus calls us blessed because of this.

Hebrews 11:1-3 <sup>1</sup>Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. <sup>2</sup>This is what the ancients were commended for.

<sup>3</sup>By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Faith is not being sure in something we know about or have seen. There is no faith in that. Faith is being sure of something we haven't seen. We might hope for it, but we don't necessarily know it. In this case, we have faith. Great faith is not just hoping for it, but knowing it with certainty, even though we do not see. In this, we can determine our own faith. Are we sure of what we believe? Why? Is there something that we've seen? Has God done something in our lives to bring us to the point of understanding His plans? Or are we believing simply because we have great faith, being certain without having seen anything? Either of these are evidences of faith. Just like Thomas had faith after Jesus appeared to him, those who have faith because of something they have experienced are blessed for their faith. However, as Jesus tells Thomas and says similarly regarding the centurion, what great blessings those with great faith will have – those who believe even though they have not seen!

Many times, we as Christians will come across those who do not believe and they look at us as if we are odd, not understanding how we can have such faith in something we have not seen. We may not have seen, but our faith is not blind faith. We might not have seen anything, but we recognize that the truths of the Bible, the facts of others' experiences and the knowledge of what has happened in the past is evidence enough for us to have a belief of these spiritual truths without having seen for ourselves. You see, spiritual things can only be seen with spiritual eyes.

1 Corinthians 2:13-14 . <sup>13</sup>This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.<sup>C</sup> <sup>14</sup>The man without the Spirit

does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>1</sup>

This is why the world looks at us and thinks we are odd. We are odd to them because they cannot discern spiritual things. We do not put them down or make them feel bad. Chances are, there was a time that we were once as spiritually blind as they are today. Yet, today we see. It is possible that one day, they too will see. In fact, it is for this reason that we exist – to help others see spiritually when right now all they see is what they can see physically. We must continue to do the work of God to build His kingdom.

Proverbs 17:24 A discerning man keeps wisdom in view,  
but a fool's eyes wander to the ends of the earth. <sup>2</sup>

Proverbs 26:12 <sup>12</sup>Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?  
There is more hope for a fool than for him. <sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Excerpted from *Compton's Interactive Bible NIV*. Copyright (c) 1994, 1995, 1996 SoftKey Multimedia Inc. All Rights Reserved

<sup>2</sup>Excerpted from *Compton's Interactive Bible NIV*. Copyright (c) 1994, 1995, 1996 SoftKey Multimedia Inc. All Rights Reserved

<sup>3</sup>Excerpted from *Compton's Interactive Bible NIV*. Copyright (c) 1994, 1995, 1996 SoftKey Multimedia Inc. All Rights Reserved