

Exercising Your Faith



- Theme:** Mustard seed faith. Little is much when God is in it. Proper 22 (27) Year C
- Object:** A jar of jelly (or something similar) and a [hand exerciser](#) or a rubber ball to squeeze.
- Scripture:** The apostles said to the Lord, "Show us how to increase our faith." The Lord answered, "If you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'May you be uprooted and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you! Luke 17:5-6 (NLT)

One day I took a jar of jelly out of the cabinet and tried to open it. I tried and tried to open the jar, but my hands just weren't strong enough to hold the jar tightly and turn the lid. It is a little embarrassing to try to open a jar and not be able to do it, so I decided that I needed to increase the strength in my hands. I got this hand exerciser to help me. You have probably seen one of these. You just squeeze the two sides together, like this. If you don't have one of these, you can do the same type of exercise by squeezing a rubber ball. By doing these exercises every day, my hands will surely be strong enough to open a jar of jelly. It doesn't take a huge amount of strength to open a jar of jelly, does it? No, if you just have a little strength, that will be enough.

How many of you know what faith is? Faith is trusting in God and depending on him. Faith is like a muscle, if you exercise your faith every day, it will become stronger. We are sometimes very quick to say that we have faith in God. We say that we believe that He can do anything, but then we act as if everything depends on us. That isn't a very strong faith, is it?

One day, Jesus was teaching his disciples about the importance of forgiving others. He told them that even if someone sins against you seven times a day, you must forgive them every time. The disciples thought that would be a very hard thing to do, so they said to Jesus, "Show us how to increase our faith."

Jesus answered them, "If you had faith, even as small as a mustard seed, then you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."

Wow, that is amazing faith, isn't it? Do you know why that is possible? It is because God's power doesn't depend on our strength. It all depends on him! There is a song that we sing that says it all. "My God is so big, so strong and so mighty. There's nothing my God cannot do!" All we need is a just a little bit of faith!

Dear Lord, help us to exercise our faith each day, but also help us to remember that your strength is enough for anything we need. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Activities

HEAVEN MOBILE: Use blue poster board with blue yarn hanging from a blue hanger (if possible). Make 3 round blue poster board circles and let children glue cotton balls on it and make a mobile to remind them of heaven where Lazarus went! Additional blue circles could be added to the "mobile"

for words about HEAVEN, ANGELS, etc.

POPSICLE STICK PEOPLE: Use purple cloth or felt for a stick puppet to represent the rich man and "burlap-type" or brown felt material for Lazarus. Use a little white Styrofoam ball for the head and decorate it. Let the children review the story using their stick puppets.

DRESS UP BAG RELAY: Fill one paper bag with dressy clothes and one bag with ragged clothes. Let the children form teams and have a relay race to dress up like the rich man and Lazarus. If time permits, teams can switch bags and play again! Have a discussion about today's lesson! (Make sure each bag has similar items and the same number of items.)

TRADING PLACES: This game is similar to musical chairs. Half the children can be named the RICH MAN and the other half can be named LAZARUS. When the music stops, the teacher will shout out either RICH MAN or LAZARUS and only those will quickly get up and trade places. To make it fun toward the end, the teacher could shout out both names and all the children will get up and trade places.

TWO HEARTS: Let each child decorate two large hearts and write, trace or glue a sign on each of them: UNFAILING LOVE and MY HEART REJOICES IN SALVATION. Hearts can be hung from each other, by string or yarn to hang in the classroom or at home.

HEAVEN CLOUDS: For younger children - Children will glue some cotton to a paper plate that they have lightly colored with blue crayon. Words can be written: I WANT TO BE IN HEAVEN WITH JESUS and write their name on the plate.

TRADING PLACES: Have the children scattered around a large designated area. The teacher should have 3-4 different areas well-marked for the different areas (using poster board pictures or words or large stand up items) such as the "forest area" (trees picture or a standing artificial tree if available); heaven (words or a pic on a poster board), Zoo picture on poster board (animals), etc. The teacher will tell the children to run to the ZOO, or run to the forest, or run to heaven! Tell them to trade places each time the whistle is blown or as teacher would like to call out ideas for trading places. Then the children will sit down in a circle, near the heaven poster board, and listen to today's story.

TRADING PLACES FOR ARTWORK: The teacher will provide construction paper, markers, and stickers for children to create a picture of today's story. When the teacher has given the children 3-4 minutes of drawing time, tell them to trade places and go to someone else's drawing and continue to draw or decorate for 2 minutes and then trade places once again to continue to decorate another drawing. Make sure the children have written their names on their papers at the beginning so they can return to their original drawing and see what the "trading places" has done to their drawing.

BIBLE VERSE LINE UP: Have the children line up and start with the first person in line to SAY or to WRITE the first word of today's Bible verse or a verse that the teacher can choose for the children to learn today. The next child in line will trade places with the first child to write a word and that child will write the next word, and continue to TRADE PLACES until the entire verse has been recited or written on a decorated poster board! Children may also TRADE PLACES for a chalk drawing or to answer questions about today's lesson. Make sure to emphasize TRADING PLACES each time so children will remember their story today.

Object: Mustard seeds or a mustard seed necklace.

Scripture: The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you." Luke 17:5-6 (NIV)

Have you ever seen a mustard seed? The mustard seed is one of the smallest of all seeds. Here, let me show you one. The mustard seed is so small that you can hardly even see it. Some people wear a necklace that has one of these tiny mustard seeds inside of a piece of glass. They wear this necklace as a symbol of

their faith in God. Do you know why the mustard seed is considered a symbol of faith?

One day, Jesus was talking to his disciples when one of them turned to him and said, "Lord, increase our faith." Jesus answered and said, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you." Can you imagine what it would be like to have that kind of faith?

I heard a story about a man who read this verse in the Bible and decided to put it to the test. There was a large tree in his front yard, so he went out to that tree and said, "In the morning when I wake up from my sleep, I want you to be gone." That night the man went to bed. When he woke up the next morning, he went to front door, opened it, and looked out into his front yard. "Just as I thought!" the man said. "It's still there."

Well, first of all, the man didn't have mustard seed sized faith, did he? In fact, he didn't have any faith at all. When he told the tree to be moved, he never expected it to happen. In the second place, I think that the man misunderstood what Jesus was trying to teach his disciples.

Jesus was not suggesting that you and I go around trying to move trees just to prove that we have faith. What Jesus was trying to teach his disciples -- and what he wants you and me to learn -- is that it doesn't take a great faith to produce great results. Why? Because the results don't depend on us, they depend on God. If the results depended on the size of our faith, I have no doubt that we would probably go around bragging about our great faith.

What have we learned about faith today? This is what I hope we have learned: Don't ask for a great faith so that we can do great things -- ask for faith the size of a mustard seed so that we can see God do great things!

Dear Father, we ask for a mustard seed sized faith. Help us to believe and never doubt your mighty power. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Luke 17:5-10

FAITH BANNER: Cut a long piece of felt or cloth or even a long rectangle poster board and draw FAITH with markers going down the left side. Make the acrostic of F - antastic; A - dventure; I - n; T - rusting; H - im! Decorate with stickers or sequins, etc for a wall hanging.

MUSTARD SEED NECKLACE: Draw and cut out small circle about the size of a medallion. Have children draw a mustard seed on one side (or glue on a real mustard seed if available); and on the other side of the medallion necklace, children can write: WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.

SHIELD OF FAITH: Make a large shield out of poster board and have children draw a cross in the middle and write FAITH across the top and wear over their shoulders as a shield, with rope, string or yarn.

FAITH PUZZLE: Teacher can have a picture of a mustard seed and a large bush with the Bible verse printed on the picture - cut into several pieces and give one puzzle in an envelope to each child to put together and quote the Bible verse together!!

FAITH POSTER: Have children take turn decorating a class poster that will say in large letters: FAITH IS JUST BELIEVING WHAT GOD SAID HE WOULD DO!!

CHALKBOARD FAITH - Have child draw FAITH as large as possible on the chalkboard. Another child can draw a TINY mustard seed in the corner and another child can draw a very LARGE MUSTARD BUSH. Each child can write their names on part of the mustard bush if they choose to have FAITH in GOD. Discuss asking God for more faith to believe and to trust because GOD HAS ALL POWER!!!

SEED RELAY: Divide the children into teams. Give each child a small broom and a "seed" to push the seed to the finish line. Let each child on both teams have a chance to push the seed with the broom.

BLOWING SEEDS: Let children sit on one side of the table or behind a line on the floor. Children will be given a straw and when the teacher says, "GO"... the children will see who can BLOW the seed across the table the quickest... or across the finish line on the floor.

SEEDED FAITH: Provide each child with a piece of construction paper, glue and small seeds. Children can write FAITH with the glue and then sprinkle the seeds on the glue, to decorate the FAITH word. Children can then write words or phrases from the Bible verse today around the FAITH word on the paper. Children could also choose to write PRAYER with the seeds, etc.

ONLY BELIEVE WALL HANGING: Give each child a long piece of paper as a wall hanging, and words of the song, "ONLY BELIEVE". Children can tape or glue the words to the wall hanging and decorate the edges with markers. Stickers and glitter would be great to decorate the wall hanging as well!!

PRAYER CIRCLE - Let children sit in a circle and roll or throw a seed to another classmate. When the child gets the seed, let that child pray or name a prayer request. Then he will roll or throw the small seed to another child in the circle who will do the same. Continue as time allows.

SING A SONG: BELIEVE chorus -- goes like this --- BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED!