

# **Believe You Can Do What Jesus Did**

*By Bobby Schuller*

Next week we're going to be going into a series about our thought life, but I thought before we get into that, we need to talk about faith. Faith is the idea that my life is not limited to what I am currently experiencing. Isn't that good? It doesn't matter how good your life gets, it can get better. It doesn't matter how good your business is going, it can do better. It doesn't matter how deep your friendships are, they can get deeper. That no matter who you are, in life, your life is not limited to what you are currently experiencing. Your life is limited to how much faith you have, and that's it. Your life is limited by your belief. By your belief. And I believe today that you're going to leave here with more faith, with a fresher vision for your life, and that you're going to see more is possible in your future; that you're going to leave here in love with possibility because Jesus promised us nothing is impossible to us who believe and He proved it.

And I want to talk today mainly about one of my favorite bible characters, Peter, and how Peter showed us that any schlub can become an awesome man of God. I want you to leave here believing you can be more. And that's not to say that you're not enough. The Lord loves you, He's proud of you, you're doing a lot better than you think, but you can be even more, you can experience even more; that your life is not limited in the ways that you think it is. And I know if you're a human being,

you've said to yourself many times, I am too this or that. I'm too old, too young, I'm not educated enough, I'm not smart enough, I'm not rich enough, I'm not networked enough. Let's just let go of all of those, amen? We're going to let go of all the things that say we're not enough and today we're going to agree with that and just say that's fine because He's more than enough and He loves to do miracles through everyday normal people like you and like me.

So I want to begin, I'm talking about Peter, and I want to ask this question: in Acts chapter three after Jesus ascends into heaven, Peter's at the Gate Called Beautiful and there is a crippled man there and he's been there for years begging at the gates. Can't work, relies on the charity of religious pilgrims to give him money, and Peter famously looks down at this man when he asks him for money, and he says "silver and gold have I not, but rise up and walk," and He picks the man up by faith, he's healed through a miracle, and the man goes into the temple running and leaping and praising God.

And my question for you this morning is presumably Jesus went in and out of that temple many times, and if that man had been there for years, it hadn't been that long ago when Jesus walked by him and the man asked Him for money or for healing, and Jesus did nothing. Why didn't Jesus heal that man? I want you to hold onto that question and put it in your pocket, or your purse or whatever you keep things in.

In Jesus' day, every boy wanted to be a rabbi. Rabbis were the most influential, important people in the Jewish community. Jews loved and still today love the Torah. They love the Torah. They believe that if one generation lost the word of God, that everything would be lost. They believed and they were so honored to be the family of Abraham; to carry the word of God to the whole world. The most important knowledge – how to live a good life. And they did this. They studied the word, they believed the word, they were people that were full of the word. There was one quote that says we love to stuff our children with Torah as we stuff an ox. And they did. At five years old, all Jewish children, boys and girls would begin a school called Bet Seffer, and in this school, they would learn the whole Torah. That's the first five books of the bible, and not only would they learn it, they would memorize it! Memorize it! From five to ten, memorize the bible. That's crazy. That's like Haven, and you can do it, Haven, I believe you can, memorize like just tell me Leviticus 23, what does it say?

And so they were so full of the bible, and the idea was that if someone came; they were always under attack. The Jews have always been attacked since they've ever existed. And they believed if somebody came and burned every bible on earth, every Jewish boy and girl could quote it from beginning to end, and it will never, ever be lost.

At age ten, the girls would go to work with their mom. It was the ancient world and most of the boys would go back to work, as well, but

some of the boys, the really gifted students would then go on to another level of schooling, and in this schooling, they would study the rest of the Old Testament, including the writings and the prophets and the proverbs, and they were really good. I mean they would debate and they would talk, and a lot of these would become the higher level people in the community, oftentimes elders and things like this.

But at age 13, all boys would go back to work except for the elite of the elite; the best of the best. And these boys were the ones that thought maybe, just maybe I could become a student of the rabbi; a Talmudine. A talmid is a disciple and the Talmudine are the disciples, and a disciple is someone who is like an apprentice. It's not just a student. You don't just read books and learn rote knowledge. It would be like if you were a plumber and a master plumber, and you brought some twenty-year-old kid and he began to follow you around, and you're like okay you use this tool for this, and this is how you get a hairball out, and this is what you do when this is backed up, or whatever. And by doing what you do, your apprentice would eventually, hopefully become a master plumber.

And in those days, the talmid, the disciple was supposed to become just like the rabbi. You see like today we have all sorts of denominations and traditions, ways in which we view the bible. Back then there were different rabbis who disagreed on things. They had their own unique way of interpreting the bible and what it meant for Jewish life. And it was so important for them that they wanted their students to

teach their yoke. The yoke was their interpretation of torah; their special teaching; their mantle. And they wanted only the brightest, the best, the smartest, the very, very best to hand their yoke to. And these boys would become talmid; Talmudine. They would be disciples. They would do what the rabbi does. If the rabbi walks, they would often put their feet in the actual footprints in the dust of the rabbi. Even today you will see old orthodox rabbis walking around with young men behind him studying to become rabbis. It was a huge honor.

And so after the final school, sometimes these 13-year-old boys would go to find their favorite rabbi in the hopes that they could become a talmid; a disciple, an apprentice. And they would be really nervous because asking a rabbi to follow him would be like applying to Harvard. You're not likely to get in. They only take the best of the best. And imagine this young teenage boy ascending the mountain to some special Jewish school and there is a small group of Talmudine around a rabbi, doing what he's doing, saying what he's saying, learning from him, and the boy would say I want to be your disciple. And immediately that rabbi would begin to ask him really difficult questions, and they would go back and forth, sometimes for hours, sometimes for days back and forth. And 99% of the time this rabbi would look down at this teenage boy and he would say 'ply your trade.' Ply your trade means go do what your dad does. You're not good enough. Go be a carpenter. Go be a fisherman. Go be a mason. Just go do what your dad does. Nice try.

Every once in awhile, though, one out of a hundred, a young boy would ascend that mountain and he would say rabbi, I want to learn from you. I want to follow you. And the rabbi would grill him and question him and finally, impressed by this young man's intelligence and good looks and everything else, he would say yes! Follow me. And follow me meant you got accepted. Your acceptance letter to Harvard. You're in. You can be like me. Follow me. Do what I do. Say what I say. Learn from me. Son, let me tell you something. Your whole life is going to change. You're going to be a rabbi and you're going to be just like me. You're going to take my yoke upon you and you're going to carry it on for the next generation. And that boy would enter training to become a rabbi, the most honored man in his community. Wow.

Here's Peter plying his trade; a young man fishing, fixing his fishing net, sitting on the shore. Today is just like every other day, something snagged and I need to fix this or that. What if Peter was one of those boys who wanted to be a rabbi? What if Peter ascended the mountain of his favorite rabbi and the rabbi said go ply your trade. Get out of my school. There he was plying his trade, just like his dad, just like his grandpa, just like his great grandpa catching fish, peddling fish. And one day a famous rabbi named Jesus who has already performed miracles and He's already a little bit famous, He comes up to Peter and He says "Peter, follow me." Famous words. Famous words! Peter, I think you're good enough. Peter, I think you're smart enough to do what I do.

Peter, follow me and you will be able to do the things I do, and you'll be able to teach the things I teach. I believe in you.

And you ever wonder when you read the gospels why the disciples sort of like mindless.. are they on drugs? What is going on here? He just dropped his net and followed Him. He just tipped over his tax collectors table and followed Him. He just left everything he was doing and didn't say a word to anybody and just started following Him. Why? Because they just received the greatest hope of every young Jewish boy.

And so here's Peter, maybe 20-years-old, and he receives a once in a lifetime opportunity to become talmid, and to become talmid means to become like the rabbi and to do what the rabbi does. Only problem is this isn't just a rabbi. He's not just a teacher. He starts doing more than just giving good sermons. He starts doing some pretty crazy stuff. And in that tradition, you do what the rabbi does. If He heals a guy, you heal a guy. He casts out a demon, you cast out a demon. And you look in Luke chapter 9 and 10, Jesus sends out the 12 and the 72, and He tells them go out and proclaim the presence of the kingdom of God to anyone who would listen and heal the sick and raise the dead and cast out demons and don't bring anything with you. Not a sword, not food, not extra clothing, just leave it all and just go. And they did. And they came back and He said well what happened? And he said even demons bent the knee to us in your name. We healed the sick, we did many miracles in

your name and we proclaimed the kingdom of God. And He said did you need anything? And they said not once, Lord!

Reminds me of this old mission program, Teen Mania. They used to train their missionaries by teaching them to go out for like several days and carry a cross with them and bring nothing. And incredible stories would come of like people helping them in their time of need.

There's another guy, Keith Wheeler tells one of my favorite stories. In the middle of some weird dangerous country like Afghanistan, and he carries a cross around with him everywhere he goes. This is what he's done for like 20 years. He just walks around carrying a cross, talking to anybody who would listen about Jesus and he doesn't have anything. And one day he was like in the middle of a desert walking down a road and he was thirsty, and he thought to himself I want a Cactus Cooler. Do you guys know what Cactus Cooler is? It's a bubbly pineapple drink. It's really good. Really good. I don't even know where you get one anywhere. It's like chocolate soda. It might be out of business, I don't know.

And these guys in a pickup truck, they come by and they're like hey you want a ride? They're like hey you want a ride? He's like sure. He hops inside and they go how about a drink. You look thirsty. We've got some ice cold Cactus Cooler. Now I didn't see that story, it seems a little farfetched to me but he says it happened and I believe it because I have had even more far fetchier things happen to me. That's the way God is.

He loves His children, and He does weird stuff to show them that they are loved, like getting them Cactus Cooler.

So Peter and the disciples are able to do these great miracles in Jesus' name, and their minds are blown. And now they recognize that being like the rabbi is more than just giving good sermons: it's doing great things. Things they thought were never possible in God's name. And one day Jesus walks on water. Now this is really crazy. There's a lot that leads up to this.

John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin who He's very close to, is executed by Herod and so Jesus, I think, is grieving and He's in this crowd and they all want things from Him, so He gets on a boat and He goes to the other side of the Sea of Galilee to get some respite and rest to grieve, to be alone for awhile, and the crowd finds Him. Five thousand people find Him. And they want to hear from Him, so He just begins giving again and preaching and teaching and finally the disciples say Lord, you got to send these people away. It's getting late. It's nighttime already. And He says we're a long way from any town, they're going to be hungry. We need to feed them. And they say we don't have any food, so He finds a kid with two fish and five loaves and He turns it into enough food to feed everybody. And then of course everybody goes crazy. And He says all right, you guys get on the boat, you go out on the water. This crowd is getting nuts, and I will make sure they go away. And He disperses the

crowd, He gets rid of them, and then He goes up the mountain and He goes to sit up there to spend some time with the Father.

And as He's praying, it's getting early in the morning, like five in the morning, and He sees that those 12 that He sent out to get away, they're not able to get back. They're trying to row back to the shore and the waves are pushing them in and the storm is getting rougher, and there's winds coming in, and they're not able to get back to the shore to where Jesus is. And He sees them there, it's early like five in the morning, and He decides I'm going to save them.

Now imagine being the disciples. You're on a boat and you went out and now a storm is brewing and the waves are so high, they're at the height of the boat, and you can't get back, but also in this day, water was very, very scary for Jewish people. In an ancient Jewish cosmology, the belief was that there was heaven above and that there was water there, that's where rain comes from, but that's also the throne of God. Then in the middle, it's like an earth sandwich, okay? In the middle was like land and air where all of us are. And then beneath us was something like hell called sheol; the underworld, the world of the dead. And this is where like dead spirits and stuff went. A very weird thing.

And they believed that when God created the world in Genesis that the world was all water, but that God pulled the water back into sheol so that land could be revealed for people to live in. So this idea that any large bodies of fresh water were the gateway to hell. Like the way you get

to sheol is if you go through fresh water deep enough, you're going to like pop out on the other side into hell, the land of the dead.

More than that, the bible mentions this, there is this sea monster they call Leviathan. And Leviathan swims in this water. And some Jews believe Leviathan was the devil himself, others believed it was a demon. It's like this Loch Ness monster type character that everybody talks about. This is all legend, you know, but they believe that there's this Leviathan in the water and that when the devil gets angry, that's when the waves are like (WHOOSH) it's because the devil's getting close.

And remember, even though they're fishermen, it's unlikely they swam. Most people couldn't, for whatever reason. So you've got these guys on a boat on the water with Jesus who is doing a lot of good and doing things like casting out demons, and healing sick, so they're in this whole universe of miracles and now they're away from Him. They have no idea where He is, they're on the water, it's flushing, they believe this water is the gateway to hell, and now the waves are going up and they wonder is Leviathan near, and they are terrified. They are freaking out because it's five in the morning and they still can't get back to shore. Are you with me still?

Then what happens? Here comes Jesus walking on the water and they totally lose it. They think He's a ghost or a demon or something weird, and they freak out! And then someone says no, that's our rabbi. That's our rabbi. And in their minds, what they're seeing is a rabbi, not

just walking on water, Jesus is walking on hell to save them. He's walking on hell to save them. And there they are, monsters, hell, water, wind, everything and here comes Christ walking on water to save them. Through the mist, here He comes early in the morning. Someone says it's Jesus. He's here to save us. And what is Peter's first thought? Well, if you're supposed to do what the rabbi does, I guess it's my turn.

And so everybody's freaking out and Peter, the leader goes wait if He can do that, I can do that. He says rabbi, you just ask and I will come out on the water to you. And Jesus says to Peter, come. Peter gets out of that boat, and he gets several steps of water, and then something splashes over his head, he's trying to keep a positive attitude. He's getting a little lower. The wind goes (WHOOSH) getting a little deeper, but he's trying to keep it together. And he starts to sink, and Jesus reaches up. We always beat up on Peter, but I always think it's pretty impressive that he still walked on water. I mean he did sink, but he walked first, so that's pretty awesome. I'm going to give Peter a high five when I get to heaven because I've never walked on water.

And Jesus reaches down and He grabs his hand, and what does He say to Peter, do you remember? He says Peter, why did you doubt? Now think about that question. What is He asking Peter? He's not asking Peter why did you doubt in general, He's saying Peter, why did you doubt that you could do what I asked you to do? Everyone says walking on water is impossible, and they're right, unless I ask you to do it then it

becomes possible. Anything becomes possible if I ask you to do it.

Anything becomes possible if I ask you to do it. God doesn't care about our learning, and about all the things that we think are so important if we don't have faith. Faith is believing that my life is not limited to what I am currently experiencing.

And friends, let me tell you – whatever you come here today and you need a miracle, we serve a God who does miracles. You come here today and you think God has called you to do something great, and you see those waves and that wind, and you see hell and you see everything coming at you, it's because Jesus is close. It's because the calling is close. Because God is about to get you to the destiny He's called you to. It is so easy to look and say I'm not this enough, I'm not that enough. Let go of that today and begin to see a different future for yourself. Begin to think differently than you've always thought. Begin to see something that is possible that is greater than what you ever thought was possible, and ask God to ask you to walk out on the water. Ask Him to ask you to do something great, as Peter did. Lord, ask me. Just ask me and I will do it, and the Father will say to you, my son, my daughter, do it and you will.

In John, Jesus, you know, we think well that's Jesus. He does miracles. I mean that's amazing. But in John chapter 14, verse 12, Jesus says "very truly I tell you whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things." Everyone say greater things (AUDIENCE – greater things) than these because I am going to the

Father. Jesus says in the word of God, you will do greater things than He did. Do you believe it? Look, believe the word of God! If you don't believe the word of God, just throw it away. It's good for nothing if you don't believe it. Either believe it or reject it. He says you can do greater things than He did, and I believe it. I believe it.

Not only have I seen God heal the sick, not only have I seen God do amazing things, miracles that are absolutely impossible, I've also seen God do even greater things than this through everyday people who thought their life was over, who decided my life is not limited to what I'm currently experiencing. I'm going to do something great for God. I'm going to see a brighter future, a brighter present than what I'm currently experiencing.

I wrote this in my journal and I want it to be true for me, and I want it to be true for you. The more you can see, the more you can be. The more you can see it. If you can just see it, picture it, hold it in your mind, treasure it, write it down, believe in it, every day you will grow in faith and believe that in fact it's possible.

Small steps always lead to bigger steps. So you think I can't build this huge thing, but small steps always get bigger. And that's okay. Baby steps, right?

Failure is a part of victory. We think that when you pursue something from God, I mean Peter still sank, right? But all of that was

preparing him to fulfill his destiny as Peter the bishop of Rome, one of the greatest men of God who has ever lived!

So I ask you why didn't Jesus heal the man at the Gate Called Beautiful then? Because that was Peter's job. That was what Peter was called to do. It was Peter's destiny to heal that guy. And as very often we think well why doesn't God do this and God do that? And sometimes, not always, sometimes the answer is because it's somebody else's job. And this is one of the most annoying things about God is that He just doesn't do everything for us, but that He's in partnership with humanity. That He almost always does miracles through people. I don't think I've ever seen a miracle that wasn't done through someone else; laying on of hands or praying for someone or giving or doing something great. God loves to use His children to usher in His kingdom.

And so today I want to encourage you, I want you to begin to see a bigger existence for your life, a better future, and to believe truly that when you're following Jesus literally nothing is impossible. And to just begin there. And to daydream and to wonder. And to let go of a lot of the rules that you think apply so strictly to your life. And wonder if maybe by faith, God can do something great in your life. You see I believe that the day you have no purpose is the day you die. You are alive, you've got a purpose, you've got a calling, but it requires faith: faith to step out onto hell with Jesus and to walk on it fearlessly. Amen? And you will. And you will. Amen.