

Series: Born Among Us

Lesson 4: Faith-o-Metre (A Woman and a Man)

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Identify that a little faith is valuable to Jesus
- Identify what the woman and the man's encounters with Jesus says about Jesus' identity
- Continue to build a biblical image of Jesus

Materials Needed:

- ☐ A copy of the Rich Mullins's song "Hard to Get" from the album "The Jesus Record"
- ☐ A FAITH-O-METRE (see Task One)
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Bible-time costumes like robes and sandals (optional)
- ☐ Copies of page A-25
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Jesus image from last week
- ☐ Slips of paper

Note: Sometimes, especially growing up, people have doubts or questions about God and faith. Often they are scared to talk about these feelings and worry if they are still

Christians when they are thinking this way. We hope this lesson will give students a chance to talk about their feelings of doubt and to be affirmed that this does not make them crazy nor does it mean that their faith is totally untrue. For this reason, if students express fears or concerns, do not be too quick to dismiss them or say “of course God is real,” or “why would you feel that way?” Instead, affirm that those are normal questions and help them to see how God can help increase our faith, even as we long for more of it.

Lead In:

Tell the students that you are going to play a song by an artist named Rich Mullins. Ask them to listen to the song's lyrics and to guess what the song and the lesson are about. Play the song and then solicit some answers. The best answer is that the song is about faith and so is this lesson.

Task One:

Prior to the lesson, create an object that looks like a gauge. Picture a gas gauge: a semi-circle with a moveable arrow along the bottom. You may use construction paper or cardboard, depending on what is available to you. In the absence of these, draw it on the board. Either way, make it large enough for students around the room to see. Print the numbers one through ten around the edge of the circle, with one and ten at either end and the other numbers spaced evenly throughout the arch of the circle. Along the bottom write FAITH-O-METRE.

Below is a series of stories about faith. Read these to the students and have them decide how much faith the person in question has, on the FAITH-O-METRE, that is. Allow for some disagreement until the whole group is satisfied with the decision. Then read the next one. Here are the stories:

1. In the Bible there is a story about a man named Abraham and his wife Sarah. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation, with descendents so numerous that they would outnumber the stars in the sky or the sand on the shore. The problem was Abraham and Sarah did not have any children and Sarah was ninety years old! At one point, when Sarah heard strangers predicting this news, she laughed. How much faith did Sarah have? (Note: God did give Abraham and Sarah a son. Jewish people are descended from Abraham even

- today. Often, in Jesus' stories, you will still read of the Jewish people saying things like "We are sons of Abraham," or "our father Abraham." God was faithful to his promise.)
2. In the Bible, there was a time when the land was ruled by ungodly people who worshipped a god called "Baal." There was a prophet at this time called Elijah who preached the word of God. He said that God was stronger than Baal and that he would prove it. A challenge was made that the prophets of Baal and Elijah would each make an altar with a sacrifice. Elijah said that God would send down fire to burn up his sacrifice, to show how great he was. The prophets accepted the challenge, but no matter what they did, no fire came for their sacrifice. When it was Elijah's turn, he asked that before he prayed, seven buckets of water be poured over the altar, certain that God would still be able to ignite the sacrifice and prove his power. Measure Elijah's faith. (Note: The story says that God did send fire to burn up the sacrifice and that the fire was so great that it even burned up the altar around it.)
 3. After Jesus was raised from the dead, several of the disciples saw him, but one disciple, named Thomas, was not there when the others saw Jesus. When the others told him that Jesus was alive, he was sceptical. He said that he wouldn't believe it was true unless he saw the scars in Jesus hands and sides from the crucifixion. Measure Thomas' faith. (Note: Jesus did come and show Thomas his scars and Thomas believed.)
 4. There is a famous speaker and author named Joni Eareckson Tada. When Joni was just 14, she had a diving accident and was paralyzed. She explains that for many years she prayed that God would heal her and allow her to walk again. Now, however, she believes that her healing may not come until she reaches heaven. However, she continues to write and teach about God's goodness and how he used the accident for many good things in her life. Measure Joni's faith.

5. A youth group decided that it felt called to go on an overseas mission trip. The cost of the trip, however, was almost \$3000 per person for eight people and the church was struggling financially. When the budget was brought up at the annual meeting, several of the congregation members expressed concerns about raising so much money. They pointed out that the most the church has ever raised through fundraising is \$1000, and that that was many years ago. They are concerned about the youth putting in a lot of work and still not being able to go. As this was happening, however, the youth leader stood up and declared that it was God's will for them to go and that he believes God will provide for them. Measure the faith of the congregation members and then of the youth pastor.
6. The last story is about someone you know very well. It is about you. You already know your story. Where would you put yourself on the FAITH-O-METRE? Have students do this secretly in their heads.

Transition by saying something like, *Today we are going to look at some people who had more or less faith and who encountered Jesus.*

Task Two:

Task Two and Task Three are the same except that they use two different biblical passages. You are going to be the narrator of the passage while some students act out the characters and other decide where the characters fall on the FAITH-O-METRE. If you think your group would enjoy it, bring in some costumes or props that they can use during the pantomime.

Begin by asking for volunteers to play a) Jesus, b) a sick woman, c) two or three disciples, and d) two or three crowd members (you can omit these depending on the size of your group). Call these to the front and instruct them to act along as you read the biblical passage, Mark 5:25-34. Try to read this in a contemporary version—*The*

Message paraphrase does a good job here—because older versions have awkward ways of describing the woman’s illness. You may need to read and mime the story twice for the actors to get the actions right. Remind the audience to identify where the characters would fall on the FAITH-O-METRE.

Applaud the actors and have them sit down. Then ask the whole group where they would put the woman on the FAITH-O-METRE. Of course, as with all of the previous tasks, the FAITH-O-METRE is subjective. You are not looking for a correct answer so much as an understanding of the stories and the complexities of faith. Ask them to consider how the woman is described in the story—fearful, trembling—and whether these are the usual descriptions we think of when we think of people of faith.

Task Three:

Repeat Task Two with Mark 9:14-29. Ask for new volunteers who will play a) Jesus, b) two or three disciples, c) the father, d) the son, and e) two or three members of the crowd. Again, have the audience identify the father’s amount of faith on the FAITH-O-METRE.

Then ask the students what these two stories tell them about Jesus. There are several possible answers of course, but the main thing to note in this lesson is that Jesus did not wait for people to have perfect faith before helping them. Jesus does not seem to expect perfect faith but was able to work even with doubters like the nameless man and woman. While Jesus admired what faith they did have, he did not send them away to get more faith before intervening in their problems. He helped them because they needed help.

Task Four:

Give the students copies of the questionnaire on page A-25 and pens. Give them several minutes to fill it in. Tell them that they will not be required to show their answers.

When they are done, regather the group and ask them if they were surprised by their own answers and why. Ask them if other people would be surprised by their answers and why. Ask them which questions were hardest to answer. Ask them if Jesus expects them to have perfect faith, why or why not? Remind them that a little faith is greatly extolled by Jesus in the New Testament (Luke 17:5-6).

Task Five:

Once again, revisit the image of Jesus that you started in the first lesson of this series. Ask the students what new things they want to add or change about Jesus as a result of this lesson and allow them to adapt the image as appropriate.

Closing:

Close in prayer, thanking Jesus for who he is and asking God to reveal to each of the students a fresh understanding of his character.