

## **Mark 6:1–6 — Jesus Rejected At Home**

**March 21, 2019**

How many of you have family members that do not know Jesus? Have you ever shared the good news of Jesus with them and faced rejection? Have family members ever laughed at you because they can't believe you take Jesus seriously? If you have ever experienced rejection by family because of the gospel, you are in good company. Jesus experienced the same thing. His family laughed at his claims to be the Messiah. His brothers and sisters even thought he was insane. Jesus was rejected by more than just his family. His entire hometown mocked his claims to be the Messiah. We will learn more about the rejection Jesus faced by family and friends this morning.

We are working our way through the Gospel of Mark. We just finished Mark 5. In that chapter, Jesus was incredibly popular in and around the city of Capernaum. Crowds of 10,000 or more followed him. They wanted to hear his teaching and be healed.

As soon as we get to Mark 6, everything changes. Instead of Jesus being the center of attention, he was mocked and rejected by the people he grew up with in his hometown.

This hard-hearted rejection was not all bad. For the last few chapters of Mark, Jesus had his disciples with him. He was providing on-the-job training for them before he sent them out on a short-term missions experience that we will study next week. Up to this point, the reaction of people to Jesus and the gospel, especially in the city of Capernaum, was great. People were raging fans. That is not always the way people will respond to Jesus and the gospel message. As

part of the disciple's training program, so they knew what it was like to experience hard-hearted rejection of Jesus, not just a warm reception of Jesus, Jesus took his disciples from Capernaum, where most people loved him, to Nazareth, where most people mocked Jesus and his claims to be the Messiah.

Open your Bibles to Mark 6. This is a short section. I ask you to stand and follow along in your Bibles as I read Mark 6:1-6.

In the Bible, it only says Jesus was astonished twice in his life. Jesus was astonished by the faith of a centurion that didn't insist on Jesus traveling to his home to heal his servant. That Gentile centurion had great faith and believed all Jesus needed to do was say the word and his servant would be healed. The Bible says Jesus was astonished at that centurion's great faith. The only other time Jesus was astonished was when he visited his hometown. There he was astonished at people's lack of faith.

Earlier in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus told us the parable of the soils, which describes the different ways people respond to hearing the Word of God. Some people are like good ground. When the seed of the Word of God falls on their hearts, it grows and produces a crop. In Capernaum, where Jesus was wildly popular, some hearts were good ground. They responded to Jesus and produced and led other to Jesus. Sadly, the hearts of most of the people in Capernaum were either rocky soil or thorny soil. They were excited about Jesus for the moment, but most people were more focused on Jesus' miracles so they fell away from Jesus when he left town.

Nazareth, which was Jesus' hometown, is an example of gospel seed that falls on the path. The soil on the path was hard-packed. Gospel seed can never penetrate and grow. Hard-packed soil was an apt description of most people's hearts in Nazareth. They were so unreceptive to Jesus as the Messiah that the gospel seed could not penetrate and take root. This is why Jesus was met with mockery and disdain in his hometown. It was not a problem with Jesus. The problem was the hardness of their hearts which left them incapable of hearing the truth.

## Background

Before we get into our study, we need a bit more background to understand these verses.

### Jesus was rejected by his family.

We need to learn a little more about Jesus' family. Jesus had half-brothers and half-sisters. Rather than being a supportive of Jesus, they strongly opposed their older brother. They thought Jesus was a maniac, a raging lunatic when he claimed to be the Messiah, taught the Bible and healed the sick. Some of you may remember how his family responded at the beginning of his ministry when Jesus' popularity soared through the roof because of his teaching and healing. He didn't get a lot of support from home.

And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind." Mark 3:21 (ESV)

They mocked him at the beginning of his ministry. The Gospel of John tells us how they felt about him at the end of his ministry after three years of teaching, miracles and healings were under his belt.

### For not even his brothers believed in him. John 7:5 (ESV)

Most of us forget the rejection Jesus felt by his own family. We forget they wanted to lock him up. Can you imagine how painful it was for Jesus to not have support from home? These were the brothers and sisters Jesus spent his childhood and early adult years caring for with Joseph and Mary. As the oldest son, he no doubt went to work with Joseph and helped provide for his brothers and sisters from his labor. To have the same family you cared for claim you lost your mind would be so painful. Thankfully, Jesus' biological family eventually had a change of heart. That change of heart didn't come until after the resurrection. We will learn more about that change of heart later this morning.

### Jesus was rejected by his hometown.

Luke 4 tells us Jesus made an earlier visit to Nazareth. Some scholars believe Luke 4 is the same visit to Nazareth talked about in Mark 6, others believe it was an earlier visit. For a variety of reasons, I believe Luke 4 was an earlier visit.<sup>1</sup> First, in Luke 4, Jesus told the people of Nazareth, "You *will* ask me to perform miraculous healing in your hometown that I did in Capernaum." It is future tense. In Luke 4, Jesus hadn't performed many miraculous healings in Capernaum. When we get to Mark 6, those healing took place. After the end of Mark 5, Jesus left Capernaum and doesn't return.

And he said to them, "Doubtless *you will quote* to me this proverb, ' "Physician, heal yourself." What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.' " Luke 4:23 (ESV)

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 6 tells us Jesus had his disciples with him. Luke 4 doesn't say anything about his disciples being with him. Jesus calls his first disciples in Luke 5. Luke 4 also says they will (future tense) ask him to do the healings like he did in Capernaum in his hometown. In Luke 4, Jesus hadn't done the healings in Capernaum. In Mark 6, he completed his healings in Capernaum and went to his hometown.

An additional reason I believe these are different visits to Nazareth is because in Luke 4, Jesus was at the beginning of his ministry. He finished his time of temptation in the wilderness by Satan. He hadn't called his disciples. The calling of the disciples comes later in Luke 4. In Mark 6, Jesus already had his disciples with him for many chapters. This tells us the visit Jesus made to Nazareth in Mark 6 was a different visit than the visit he made in Luke 4. It also tells us the visit in Mark 6 is a much later visit to Nazareth than he made in Luke 4.

How did Jesus' first visit to Nazareth transpire? In that first visit, Jesus was asked to read the Scripture and teach in the local synagogue on the Sabbath. The text Jesus chose came from Isaiah 61. He read two messianic prophecies about the way the Spirit of the Lord would be upon the Messiah. He read how the Messiah would release captives, give sight to the blind, and allow freedom for the oppressed. Then he closed the scroll and turned to the crowd to say, "Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your ears." In other words, "I am the Messiah. This is the beginning of my ministry. Today is the time of the Lord's favor."

Up to that point, things went well. As a preacher, the problems people have with your sermons are not when you read from the Bible. It is when you start teaching from the Bible that people get upset. That is exactly what happened to Jesus. He quoted a proverb which said no prophet would be accepted in his hometown. Then he told them their hearts were hard and because of the hardness of their hearts God, God was not going to extend his

favor to them — good Jewish people — but to Gentiles, who were notoriously far from God. Jesus then gave a few examples of this from the Old Testament.

As you can imagine, people do not like being told they are hard-hearted. They didn't like being told God rejected them because of the hardness of their hearts. What happened next is they took Jesus to the cliff the city was built upon. They planned to



throw him over the cliff. Jesus miraculously stopped them, walked through the crowd, and continued his ministry. Here is a photo of the cliffs in Nazareth. That is where they wanted to throw him over the edge

When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away. Luke 4:28–30 (ESV)

The first time Jesus preached in his hometown, they tried to kill him. That is not a good track record!

I have preached some sermons that didn't go over well. Thankfully nobody tried to throw me over a cliff after I gave them. The reason you haven't thrown me over a cliff after some of my sermons may be because it is hard to find cliffs in Iowa. I prefer to believe it is because you are a gracious people that are not hard-hearted like the people of Nazareth. I have two things working in my favor. There are no cliffs in Iowa, and the graciousness of your character, and for that I am thankful.

Let's remember the purpose of this visit. Jesus was providing some on-the-job training for his disciples. He was preparing them to experience people

who were hard-hearted to the gospel. The crowd with the hardest hearts against the gospel Jesus had found were the people in his hometown, the people who tried to throw him over the edge of a cliff after only one message. They were about as hard-hearted as Jesus could find.

In Mark, the first verse of each section sets the stage for what follows. It is no different in this little section. We will let the first verse set the stage, then we will get into the rest of our study.

He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. Mark 6:1 (ESV)

Mark tells us Jesus left Capernaum and headed to his hometown. Mark 1:9, 24 tells us Jesus' hometown was Nazareth. Jesus was born in Bethlehem but grew up in Nazareth. Nazareth was not far from Capernaum. It is only 25 miles southwest. Today, Nazareth is a large and flourishing town. At the time of Jesus, it was tiny. The entire town was only 60 acres. It was located on a rocky hillside and had a population of 500 or fewer people. It was so obscure that it is never mentioned in the Old Testament, the Jewish Mishnah, or the Jewish Talmud. It is never mentioned by Josephus, who was a secular historian that wrote volumes of history from the time of Jesus. There wasn't even a church in Nazareth until the 4th century. Nathanael summarized the opinion most people held about Nazareth in the time of Jesus.



Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" ... John 1:46 (ESV)

Jesus grew up in that backwater town of only 500 people for the first 30 years of his life. Jesus knew everybody, and everybody knew him. This was the kind of town where nobody moved into the community so you ended up marrying your cousin. It was the backwater Kentucky town of the Bible. They didn't have a Wal-Mart or any chain restaurants. You would not pass through Nazareth when traveling. The problem with small towns like Nazareth is their insignificance can morph into an attitude of superiority. People who move into this type of tiny town have a hard time breaking in socially because people are cliquish and prideful.

Before we go any further, it is worth remembering the rejection Jesus experienced in his home community is something we will also experience. The Bible has many promises we can trust. One of the promises I don't like is found in 2 Timothy.

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted... 2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)

God promises that some people will persecute us for the gospel, just like they persecuted Jesus for the gospel. Thankfully, we live in an area of the country that is generally Capernaum-like in nature. People are often open to hearing about Jesus. They usually come to church when you invite them. They embrace Christian values. We are thankful for the warm welcome many in our community give to the gospel message.

While our community is Capernaum-like in nature, we are in a society that is rapidly becoming post-Christian. We should expect the kind of mockery that happened to Jesus in Nazareth to be something we will increasingly experience



today. The Bible promises we will be persecuted. Expect it. It is never fun to be persecuted for our faith but just like Jesus, we should expect it.

The story continues.

And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things?” Mark 6:2 (ESV)

The Jewish custom was to allow any qualified male to speak in the synagogue. In Nazareth, with only 500 people, there were not many qualified males to give the Sabbath lesson. Even though Jesus was almost killed the last time he preached, I am sure they were desperate for preachers so they decided to give him another try. They knew he was extremely popular in Capernaum and in Judea.

Unlike the first time, where Jesus gave a very confrontational sermon chastising the people of his hometown for their hard hearts, this time he preached an engaging and penetrating sermon.

It says all who heard Jesus were astonished at his speaking. The word astonished is a strong word. The Greek word for astonish means to hit something or knock it out. It can also mean to knock something over with a blast of air. This particular Greek word has a prefix on it that intensifies the verb. It literally means his teaching was so good it blew them away.

Rather than receiving what he was saying, which was amazingly insightful gospel truth, their hard hearts immediately began criticizing him.

They said, “Where did this man get these things?” In Greek, the words “this man” could be translated “this guy.” It was a contemptuous answer on their parts. Who did Jesus think he was speaking to them with such authority about

God and spiritual truth. He was just the village handyman. He was a nobody. He came from an insignificant family. He had no right to speak to them with polish and authority about spiritual truth.

Why were they rejecting Jesus? Familiarity breeds contempt. In a town of only 500, they were so familiar with Jesus as the town carpenter that they refused to accept spiritual truth from him. They were so familiar with him in one humble role that they couldn't accept him as a man of spiritual authority in a teaching role.

Just like the people of Nazareth, we can struggle with too much familiarity of Jesus. While we don't have physical familiarity with Jesus, because he didn't grow up at CrossWinds, many of us struggle with spiritual familiarity of Jesus because we grew up in the church, so we take Jesus for granted. We are so familiar with Bible stories and church routines that our lives have become numb to the gospel and the significance of Jesus. Are you someone that grew up in the church? Do you find yourself taking Jesus, grace, forgiveness and the Bible for granted? Familiarity with Jesus is the problem many of us have in the church. It is the same problem the people of Nazareth had with Jesus. If that is you, God calls us to repent and confess that you have become a Nazarene. He will forgive us and help us love Jesus with passion once again.

What we find next are three ways the unbelieving hearts of the Nazarenes rejected Jesus. These are the same ways hard-hearted people will also reject us when we share about Jesus.

## 1. Unbelieving hearts downplay the work of God in our lives.

...“Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands?” Mark 6:2 (ESV)

They heard about Jesus’ miracles in Capernaum. They heard his incredibly wise and insightful teaching and then they were experiencing it for themselves. Their first question was, “Who taught this to him? Where did he get all this wisdom? Who gave him these abilities?” They knew Jesus’ wisdom didn’t come from Nazareth High School. They knew he wasn’t educated by a rabbi. Where were his credentials to speak with such authority? Questions on Jesus’ credentials plagued him for years.

The Jews therefore marveled, saying, “How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?” John 7:15 (ESV)

We know know the source of Jesus’ wisdom and healing abilities. They didn’t come from another rabbi. They came directly from God.

How did Jesus receive this wisdom? The Bible tells us that as Jesus matured, he grew in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and man. Jesus went through an educational process, just like every young adult today. If his earthly education didn’t come primarily from an earthly teacher, like a rabbi, how did he mature into the full measure of what it means to be the Son of God?

While it doesn’t tell us this in Scripture, I guess Jesus rose early in the mornings before work and school. He probably came to the synagogue in Nazareth, the only place the scrolls of God’s Word could be found, and he studied them before he began his day. In that time, the Holy Spirit took the Word of God and applied it to his heart, maturing him and teaching him, just like God does in our lives.

I love new Christians. They have a voracious appetite for the Word of God. They also love to use highlighters because as they read the Word, the Holy Spirit makes verses pop off the page as he applies those verses to their hearts. New Christians love to highlight the verses God is using in their lives to mature them into the image of Christ.

I think the same thing happened to Jesus. His education came from the time he spent in the Word of God with the Spirit of God applying the Word of God into his life giving him great wisdom, spiritual maturity and insight.

As young Christians, when we go to our non-Christian friends to tell them about the changes God is making in our lives, they don't accept or understand what is happening in our lives.

They will say, "Who do you think you are to tell us about right and wrong?" Or "Why are you acting so holy and so different?"

An example of this from my personal life is my wife. I was privileged to grow up in a Christian home. She didn't have that privilege. She grew up with friends and family that were far from God. When she became a Christian, God gave her a voracious appetite for the Bible and highlighted so many verses it looked like a children's coloring book. She cut a number of friends out of her life that were a bad influence. She tried to share Christ with other friends.

After we were married, Cindy tried to share her faith in Jesus with her grandmother, who was a committed atheist. A few years after we were married, her grandmother contracted terminal cancer. Cindy told me she felt she needed to visit her grandmother to share one more time the truth of the gospel and invite

her to become a Christian before she died. We drove to her grandmother's house, and Cindy began sharing her testimony. I can still remember her grandmother's response. She said, "I am so thankful you grew up and got away from that old lifestyle." She also said, "I am thankful you found something that helped you." Cindy kept telling her the change in her life had nothing to do with growing up. It was not a change she made, like she went on a diet. Jesus changed her life! God made her into a new person. She didn't change herself. God did all the work in her.

Her atheistic grandmother kept downplaying the changes God made in her life, just like the people of Nazareth kept downplaying the spiritual authority God shaped in the life of Jesus as he matured him through the Word.

You probably wonder what happened to Cindy's grandmother. Her grandmother eventually prayed to receive Jesus and died shortly afterwards. Was this a legitimate prayer or did she just pray to please the grandchild she loved? I don't know. Only God knows if it was legitimate. Someday we will find out in heaven.

## **2. Unbelieving hearts will attack our background.**

**"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?"... Mark 6:3 (ESV)**

Not only should we expect unbelieving hearts to dismiss the transforming power of God at work in your life now, but we need to expect unbelieving hearts to pigeon-hole us into the past life from which we came.

Jesus was teaching the Word of God with authority and power. The people of Nazareth pigeon-holed him into the past. “He can’t teach us this. *He is just a local carpenter.*” He was not an educated rabbi or teacher. He didn’t go to school.

The word for carpenter is the Greek word *tekton*. We get the word tech from it. It is the root of the word technology. We also get the English word architect from it, which means chief builder. The Greek word Teuton simply means to build. It is a very general word. It doesn’t specify what you build. It could be wood. It could be metal. It could be masonry. It describes Jesus as someone that worked with his hands building things. In that time, wood was in short supply. Many things were built of stone. Jesus and Joseph could have served as stone masons, not just wood builders. Support for Jesus, and his father, Joseph, serving as wood carpenters, not general builders, comes from a quote found in an early church letter from 150 AD which claimed Jesus and Joseph build wooden yokes and plows. This would mean Jesus and Joseph built wooden farm equipment. We don’t know if that is true. It is not from the Bible. What we do know is that Jesus came from a blue collar family that made a living working with their hands building things from wood, but probably from more than just wood. They could only see Jesus from the perspective of his family business, that he was nothing more than a carpenter.

The Nazarenes also pigeon-holed Jesus into his family background. “Doesn’t he have brothers and sisters here with us? How can he claim to be the Messiah, the Son of God? We know what kind of family he has. The Messiah definitely wouldn’t come from his home.” As we saw earlier, none of Jesus’

brothers or sisters believed in him. Thankfully, all of that changed after Jesus rose from the dead. When Jesus rose from the dead, he paid a special resurrection visit to at least some of his family members, which really freaked them out. Jesus alive from the dead turned them from mockers into worshipers. Jesus' half brother James went on to become the leader of the church in Jerusalem and write the book of James in our Bible. Jesus' half-brother Judas went on to write the book of Jude. We don't know what happened to the other two brothers and his sisters.

Some people, believe Mary was a perpetual virgin. The problem with that claim is they need to explain this verse, which tells us Jesus had half-brothers and sisters.

How do some people try to explain away this verse? Some claim these brothers and sisters were all Joseph's children from a previous marriage before he met Mary. That is unlikely because none of them were mentioned until after the birth of Jesus. They were not mentioned before the birth of Jesus. Others claim Mary stayed a virgin and these were his cousins, not his half-brothers and sisters. That is also unlikely because Greek has a word for cousins, and it is not used in this verse. The Greek word used in this verse is for biologically related brothers and sisters. It is hard to make a case for anything other than the obvious meaning of the text.

What can we expect from hard-hearted people? First, hard-hearted people will credit the changes God makes in our lives as nothing more than changes we made on our own. Second, the unbelieving heart likes to discredit us

by trying to push us into our backgrounds and not recognizing the changes God made in our lives.

The same things happens with us when we try to share the gospel with someone who has a hard heart. Expect they will try to discredit us because of our background. They will say things like, “I can’t trust you because you were divorced.” “I won’t believe you because at one time you were an alcoholic or you were a criminal or you were incarcerated.” Our background doesn’t determine our lives. Jesus determines our lives. He makes us into new creations.

### **Unbelieving hearts will attack us!**

**And they took offense at him. Mark 6:3 (ESV)**

The word offense is the Greek word scandalize. They were furious at Jesus. It was absolute blasphemy in their minds that he would claim to be the Son of God. He was too ordinary. There was absolutely nothing special about him that set him apart.

Some of the apocryphal gospels, that were never recognized by the church as true, have stories of Jesus doing miracles as a child, such as making clay birds, then clapping his hands to give them life and make them fly. How do we know these apocryphal gospels are not true? Here is the evidence. If Jesus was doing miracles as a child in Nazareth, the people of Nazareth wouldn’t have rejected him because he was too ordinary. They would have recognized him as extraordinary. Prior to him beginning his ministry, there was nothing special about him to the average person other than he didn’t sin.

What we can learn from this is unbelievers will attack us, just like they attacked Jesus.



**“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.” John 15:18 (ESV)**

Why will unbelievers attack us? They will attack us for nothing more than believing the gospel message and living it out in our lives. They will find it offensive.

Next week, Jesus sent out his disciples after they finished their training on how to handle hard-hearted people in Nazareth. The sending out of the apostles is also recorded in Matthew 10. Notice what Jesus told his disciples to expect when he sent them out.

When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next,... “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household. Matthew 10:23–25 (ESV)

Jesus told his apostles they should expect people to reject them and even persecute them for nothing more than sharing the gospel message. If they could expect that kind of rejection, we can as well.

**Unbelieving hearts are sometimes found in those closest to us.**

**And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.” Mark 6:4 (ESV)**

Jesus quoted this proverb, which tells us something that is hard to hear. We can expect some of the most personal and painful rejections we will receive for the gospel to come from those closest to us. The people that Jesus grew up with for 30 years completely blacklisted him. Even after the miracles and the massive crowds in Capernaum, they still wouldn’t listen to Jesus’ gospel message.

Some of us know what this looks like. You are a believer but your spouse is not a believer. That is hard. Some of you have brothers or sisters who want nothing to do with Jesus and family gatherings are tense. Jesus knows what you are facing. He faced it himself. Jesus understands. He went through the same thing.

Now we move from the way an unbelieving heart works, to the consequences an unbelieving heart will experience.

**An unbelieving heart will not experience the transforming power of Christ.**

And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. Mark 6:5 (ESV)

When the Nazarenes rejected Jesus, he did almost no miracles in his hometown. Was it because their unbelief forced him to stop his healing hand? No. Jesus can heal anyone he wants to heal. It wasn't a power problem. It was a purpose problem. The purpose of the miracles was to attest to gospel truth. If the people of Nazareth rejected gospel truth, they had no need of a miracle to verify gospel truth.

Do you remember last week how the bleeding woman was completely healed not by touching Jesus' tassel but by the faith she had in Jesus being the only one who could cure the uncleanness in her life? Faith preceded healing. Jairus' daughter rose from the dead when he placed his faith in Jesus that he could heal her even in the face of death. Faith preceded healing once again.

When people reject Jesus with unbelief, it is not his custom to release his transforming power in their lives. Here is a great summary of that principle.

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.  
Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)

God loves to reward those who place their faith in him. This is still the way it works today.

And he marveled because of their unbelief... Mark 6:6 (ESV)

Jesus concluded where we began. He was shocked at how hard-hearted those closest to him were in unbelief.

### **Application**

How do we apply this to our lives?

**Don't be surprised when we meet people hardened in unbelief that persecute us. Jesus experienced the same thing from his family and home town.**

Expect some people will be hard-hearted against the gospel. Like Jesus, the most hard-hearted people we find may be in our own families. Expect hard-hearted people will dismiss the changes God made in our lives as nothing more than things we made up in our hearts. Expect hard-hearted people will consistently try to pigeon-hole us into our pre-Christian days. Expect they will even attack us for nothing more than sharing the gospel message. They attacked Jesus. Expect they will attack us.

**An unbelieving heart will not experience the transforming power of Christ.**

Those who will not place their faith in Christ, will not experience the transforming power of Christ in their lives. Jesus did very few miraculous works in Nazareth because there were so few people that placed their faith in him.

Thankfully, we are not a hard-hearted people in a hard-hearted church. Many of us love Jesus and want to follow him. How do these verses apply to our lives?

**As Christians, if we live our daily lives without faith, we should not expect to be rewarded by God for our faith.**

We may not live in hard-hearted unbelief, like the people of Nazareth, but we are very much in danger of living in practical unbelief. By that I mean we live and act as if the words in our Bible are not true. Let me give you an example.

The Bible tells us in James 5:16 that the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Do we believe that prayer makes a difference? Are we a people that don't pray because practically we don't believe prayer makes a difference. That is practical unbelief. If we live that way, we should not expect God to work in powerful ways in our lives because we are not praying to him in faith.

One practical way we can apply this is I put prayer cards back in the bulletin. Are you struggling with your health? Are you struggling at work or with your job? Let us know on the prayer card. Either leave it in the pew or put it in the offering bag that we pass around at the end of the service. I will ask the Life Groups to pray for you this week. If they are confidential requests, the elders and staff will pray for you this week.

Another example of practical unbelief is Bible reading and memory. Matthew 4:4 tells us man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Matthew tells us we need the Word of God in our lives every day for spiritual nourishment just like we need physical food every day

for physical nourishment. Do we believe that? It is easy to live in practical unbelief and ignore time in the word of God while the Bible tells us daily time in the Word of God is essential for our spiritual lives.

## Conclusion

This week, let us not be people that live in practical unbelief. Let us be committed to praying for our needs and for the needs of one another because in faith we know prayer makes a difference. Let us also be people who keep our fingers in the text, knowing that putting the Word of God in our hearts is just as important as putting food in our stomachs.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, and time with his family. Feel free to contact him at [www.Christ2RCulture.com](http://www.Christ2RCulture.com) ([www.c2rc.com](http://www.c2rc.com))

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