

Opening comments overheard in an Evangelism class at imaginary Quest Bible College

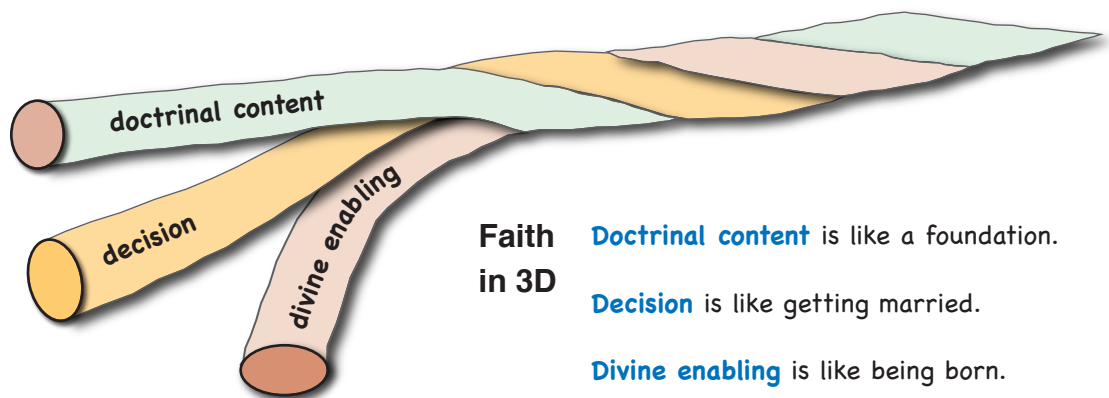
Dr. Evans (on three aspects of genuine faith)

As we saw last semester, three aspects of saving faith are clearly seen in John's Gospel: decision, doctrinal content, and divine enabling. You can call these the three D's if you wish, but I like to compare them to the three cords of a rope.

We evangelists like to emphasize the decision aspect, since we give invitations and often have the joy of seeing people respond to the gospel. Teachers emphasize the doctrinal content aspect of faith while showing that we must believe in Christ's full deity and humanity. And finally, many theologians like to stress the divine enabling or from-above aspect of genuine faith, since we can not save ourselves by good works.

I believe we can see all three aspects of genuine faith in John chapter nine. Having read through the chapter, which of these three aspects stood out to you?

Genuine saving faith is like a rope of three cords.



Evan (on the point of decision)

I love verse 38 which was the point of decision for the formerly blind man. Yet, I wonder why it took so long. If the Lord had spend more time with him soon after he was healed, I suspect that he would have believed earlier.

Ed (on what the man believed about Jesus)

What stood out to me was the educational process which brought the man from thinking that Jesus was just a prophet in 9:17 to believing in Jesus as the Son of God or God the Son in 9:35-38. His worship in 9:38 shows that he believed in Christ's deity.

Theo (on soft and hard hearts)

The soft heart toward the Lord that God gave to the man born blind and the contrasting hard hearts of the Pharisees are what stood out to me. Unlike Nicodemus, most Pharisees wouldn't admit that they were sinners who could not save themselves.

Caution: this is the answer sheet or study leader's note page. Use the blank worksheet for personal and group studies.

NEGATIVES	POSITIVES
<i>bad, dangerous, difficult, evil, inadequate, sad, sinful, ugly, etc.</i>	<i>good, blessings, clean, healthy, joyful, safe, well done, wise, etc.</i>
(9:1-7)	(9:1-7)
the unnamed man's blindness from birth (9:1)	Jesus' answer was good (9:3).
the disciple's view of possible causes (9:2)	God had a good plan for the man (9:3).
The making of clay with saliva sounds gross. (9:6).	Jesus healed the man. He was obedient (9:7).
(9:8-12)	(9:8-12)
The neighbors disagreed about the man (9:8-9).	the man's first testimony (9:11-12)
The man didn't know where Jesus was (9:12).	He said that a man named Jesus healed him.
(9:13-17)	(9:13-17)
the man being taken to the Pharisees (9:13)	the man's second testimony (9:15, 17)
The Sabbath was overly stressed (9:14-16).	on the miracle (9:15), Jesus as prophet (9:17)
Sabbath stress led to rejection by some (9:16).	Some Pharisees defended Jesus (9:16).
(9:18-23)	(9:18-23)
The Jews totally rejected the miracle at first.	The Jews' probe confirmed the miracle.
They treated the man's parents badly (9:18-23).	The man's parents were available.
Parents' testimony: weak due to fear (9:20-23)	They confirmed the miracle's reality (9:20).
The Jews reluctantly credited God, not Jesus. (9:24).	They made the Jews' unbelief look bad.
(9:24-34). <i>especially 9:26, 28, 34</i>	(9:24-34) <i>especially 9:25, 27, 30-33</i>
The Jews treated the man very badly.	The third time, the man spoke boldly and well.
They continue to question him (9:26)	He stressed the evidence, his healing (9:25).
showing that they had refused to listen.	He asking a sarcastic but proper question (9:27).
They reviled the man (9:28).	He wanted to be Jesus' disciple.
They judged him and expelled him (9:34).	He spoke long and well in 9:30-33,
They were arrogant and proud (9:34).	sounding like scholarly Nicodemus in 3:2.
(9:35-38)	(9:35-38)
The Lord's divine identity had been hidden.	The Lord's gradual revelation to the man (9:35-37).
<i>Jesus could have identified himself earlier.</i>	The man's belief and worship (9:38).
(9:39-41)	(9:39-41)
the judging (blinding) of many Pharisees	Jesus' summary of the chapter events (9:39)
their willful rejection of the evidence	the climactic Q&A in 9:40-41
What is the biggest negative in the passage?	What is the biggest positive in the passage?
the stubborn, sinful, disbelief of Jewish leaders	<i>Is it the man's belief and worship (9:38),</i>
They was sinfully agnostic (9:29-34, 41).	<i>or his powerful rejection of disbelief (9:30-33).</i>

APPLICATIONS

Do not be sinfully agnostic. Rather, believe in God the Son. *(There is plenty of evidence.)*

Commentary from various perspectives as overheard in an evangelism class at imaginary Quest Bible College

Dr. Evans (a question from the college's resident evangelist)

John chapter nine is an important chapter to study in order to understand biblical evangelism, but it is somewhat difficult because it is long and a bit complex. The man born blind came to know the Lord near the end of the chapter, but there are various other important characters in the chapter as well. To help us grasp the purpose of the chapter, my question is, "What do you think are the most important negatives and positives in the chapter?"

Evan (on the importance of evangelism and salvation)

The man got saved! What could be more important than that? There are always going to be some who reject the gospel, but I think it is usually a waste of time to focus on them.

Dr. Evans (on the way John chapter nine ends)

You are partly right, Evan, but why doesn't John chapter nine end with the man's profession of faith in 9:38? The Lord continued to teach, and the end of the chapter is about the willful spiritual blindness of the Jewish leaders. This reminds me of the way the story of the prodigal son ends in Luke chapter 15. The prodigal repented and returned, but the story does not end with that. The hardness of heart of the unrepentant older brother is stressed at the end.

Frank (on the stress on disbelief in John chapter nine)

To me, these things show the importance of the negatives. Frankly, I think there is far more in John chapter nine about the stubborn disbelief of the Jewish leaders than about the man's faith! Above all, the chapter shows that they refused to accept the clear evidence (9:39-41). The man who was healed, however, was open to what he "saw" and refused to be intimidated.

Red (on faith overcoming the world)

I've been reading through First John recently, and 1 John 5:4-5 seems to teach that genuine faith is the kind of belief that overcomes the opposition of the world. That's what I see in the man who was healed in John chapter nine. Though he seemed somewhat subdued at first (9:12-13), as the opposition to the Lord grew, the man's boldness grew as well (9:27, 30-33). His parents were intimidated, but the man was not.

Dr. Evans (on the unity of John chapter nine)

Exactly! The greatest positives in the chapter, the man's belief and salvation, are closely related to the greatest negative in the chapter, the stubborn disbelief of the Jewish leaders. We can not talk about one without also talking about the other. Likewise, to rightly proclaim the gospel of salvation through faith, we need to understand and deal with disbelief. The long parable of the soils (Mat. 13:1-23) shows this as well.