Jesus Heals You – Familiarity: A Path to Unbelief
Dr. John Carmichael

[Mar 6:1-6 NASB95] – 1 Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. 2 When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man [get] these things, and what is [this] wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? 3 "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him. 4 Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his [own] relatives and in his [own] household." 5 And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching.

[Mat 13:53-58 NASB95] – 53 When Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there. 54 He came to His hometown and [began] teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where [did] this man [get] this wisdom and [these] miraculous powers? 55 "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? 56 "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then [did] this man [get] all these things?" 57 And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his [own] household." 58 And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

[Luk 4:16-30 NASB95] – 16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. 17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, 18 "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, 19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." 20 And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." 22 And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?" 23 And He said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'" 24 And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. 25 "But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; 26 and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, [in the land] of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." 28 And all [the people] in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; 29 and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. 30 But passing through their midst, He went His way.

- If you have flown several times, you know how easy it is to stop listening to the safety instructions. You recognize the announcement. You know when the flight attendant will point toward the exits. You may already be looking at your phone.
- But having heard the instructions is different from being prepared to act on them.
- The same thing can happen spiritually: “I know this preacher.” “I have heard this Scripture.” “We have prayed like this before.”

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- In Nazareth, people knew Jesus' family and occupation. Yet their familiarity did not lead them to faith. They took offense at Him.
- They knew where He came from, but failed to recognize who He was.
- Familiarity itself is not the enemy. Knowing and loving your pastor is good. Knowing Scripture is good. Practicing prayer is good. The danger comes when familiarity produces the assumption: "There is nothing here for me to receive."
- Mark says Jesus "could do no miracle there," then immediately identifies an exception: He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. Mark connects this striking limitation with their unbelief. We should preserve "could not," rather than quietly replacing it with "would not." Bible Gateway
- Matthew makes the causal relationship explicit: He did not perform many miracles there because of their unbelief. Luke's Nazareth account develops the same themes of rejection, prophetic dishonor, and resistance to God's gracious activity.
- This was a real hindrance within Jesus' ministry in Nazareth. It does not mean His divine power disappeared or that human unbelief universally controls God. The passage shows that rejecting Jesus can hinder receiving from Jesus.

How can we keep familiarity from hindering what God wants to accomplish in our lives?

We must replace contempt with honor toward God's servants, humility toward God's message, and obedience toward God's methods.

I. Honor the Men of God: Do Not Let Their Humanity Hide Their Calling
Texts:

[Mar 6:3-4 NASB95] – 3 "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him. 4 Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his [own] relatives and in his [own] household."
[Mat 13:55-57 NASB95] – 55 "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? 56 "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then [did] this man [get] all these things?" 57 And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his [own] household."
[Luk 4:22-24 NASB95] – 22 And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?" 23 And He said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'" 24 And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown.

A. They reduced Jesus to what they already knew

They identified His occupation, His mother, His brothers, and His sisters.
Their observations were familiar facts. Their conclusion was the problem.
They could recognize the carpenter without receiving the Messiah.
"They allowed what they knew about His humanity to keep them from receiving what God was revealing about His identity."
For Jesus, the issue concerns His unique identity as the Son of God. For pastors, the application concerns recognizing God's calling upon ordinary people.

B. Familiarity can turn access into contempt

1. We see a pastor at church, at the store, or over a meal. We know his personality and

preferences. Over time, we may stop listening with spiritual attentiveness.
2. Friendship becomes an excuse to dismiss instruction.
3. Knowing someone's background becomes a reason to discount their growth.
4. Ordinary personality traits become more important to us than faithful biblical ministry.
5. Knowing the person should deepen our appreciation, not diminish our willingness to receive biblical truth.

C. Biblical honor recognizes faithful service

[1Th 5:12-13 NASB95] – 12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. [1Ti 5:17 NASB95] – 17 The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. [Heb 13:7 NASB95] – 7 Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

1. Scripture calls believers to appreciate spiritual leaders, esteem them in love because of their work, and consider the example of their faith.
2. Pastor's appreciation application: Appreciation includes more than an annual celebration. It includes: Praying for the pastor and family. Expressing specific gratitude for faithful ministry. Supporting the work through service and generosity. Receiving biblical instruction with a teachable heart.
3. Honor remains accountable to Scripture. A pastor's calling does not make every opinion divine or every action right.
4. We honor the servant because we value the God he serves."
5. Have I become so accustomed to my pastor that I no longer expect God to speak through faithful biblical preaching?

II. Receive the Message of God: Do Not Let Repetition Replace Revelation

Texts:

[Mar 6:2-3 NASB95] – 2 When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man [get] these things, and what is [this] wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? 3 "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him.
[Luk 4:16-22 NASB95] – 16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. 17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, 18 "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, 19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." 20 And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." 22 And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?"
[1Th 2:13 NASB95] – 13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted [it] not [as] the word of men, but [for] what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

A. Astonishment is not the same as faith

The people noticed Jesus' wisdom and mighty works. Yet they took offense at Him.
A person can be impressed by a sermon without submitting to its truth. "That was interesting." "That was powerful." "I have heard that before."
The question is: What will I believe and obey?
"A familiar Scripture can still require a fresh response."

B. Jesus brought a present claim through a familiar passage

In Luke 4, Jesus read Isaiah's announcement of Spirit-anointed ministry and declared its fulfillment in their hearing.
They were confronted with more than a reading they recognized. They were confronted with the identity and mission of the One reading it.
For us, the application is to listen for what Scripture requires now: repentance, trust, forgiveness, obedience, or renewed dependence upon God.

C. What the Bible Teaches About Receiving God's Word

1. Divine authority vs. human voice
When Scripture is read or faithful biblical truth is proclaimed, we receive an authority higher than human philosophy, culture, or personal opinion.
In 1 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul commends the believers for receiving the apostolic message as God's Word.
Application: Ask whether the message faithfully represents Scripture. Its authority comes from God's truth, not the preacher's personality or title.
2. Active transformation
God's Word is "at work in you who believe"—1 Thessalonians 2:13.
The Word actively changes hearts, brings conviction, and produces spiritual fruit as believers receive and respond to it.
"The Word is more than information to remember; it is truth to believe and live."
3. The posture of the listener
Humility: Receive the implanted Word with humility—James 1:21.
Obedience: Become doers of the Word—James 1:22.
Discernment: Examine teaching against Scripture—Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21.
"A teachable heart receives carefully, believes faithfully, and obeys willingly."

D. Healing application: Hear with renewed expectancy

Repeated teaching on healing can become background noise.
Instead of saying, "I already know those verses," ask: What does this passage reveal about Jesus? What assumption needs correction? What response of faith and obedience does it call for?
Knowing the reference is different from trusting the One it reveals.
Am I listening to evaluate the sermon, or also allowing Scripture to evaluate me?
Transition: Receiving God's message also means responding when His instructions challenge our expectations.

III. Respond to the Methods of God: Do Not Let Your Expectations Govern Your Obedience

Texts: [Luk 4:23-30 NASB95] – 23 And He said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'" 24 And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. 25 "But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; 26 and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, [in the land] of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." 28 And all [the people] in the synagogue were filled with

rage as they heard these things; 29 and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. 30 But passing through their midst, He went His way.

[2Ki 5:9-14 NASB95] – 9 So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha. 10 Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and [you will] be clean." 11 But Naaman was furious and went away and said, "Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.' 12 "Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. 13 Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, "My father, had the prophet told you [to do some] great thing, would you not have done [it?] How much more [then,] when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" 14 So he went down and dipped [himself] seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean.

[Jas 5:14-16 NASB95] – 14 Is anyone among you sick? [Then] he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

A. Nazareth wanted God's activity on familiar terms

In Luke 4:23, Jesus identifies their expectation that He reproduce in His hometown the works they had heard about elsewhere.

He then recalls God's provision for the widow of Zarephath and the healing of Naaman.

These examples challenged their assumptions about who would receive God's gracious help.

Their response became rage and rejection.

We can welcome God's work in principle while resisting it when it challenges our preferences.

B. Naaman nearly missed healing because he expected another method

Naaman expected the prophet to come out, invoke God's name, and make a dramatic gesture. Instead, he received instructions to wash in the Jordan.

His first response was anger. His eventual response was obedience—and he was cleansed.

"Naaman's expectation became an obstacle until he humbled himself and obeyed."

C. Ordinary biblical practices deserve fresh faith

God calls His people to pray, hear Scripture, seek prayer from elders, confess sins, and care for one another.

Familiar practices can become mechanical: We hear the Word without attending to it. We pray without engaging our hearts. We receive prayer while inwardly dismissing it. We assume a simple act of obedience cannot matter.

A familiar practice can become a fresh act of faith.

Our confidence belongs in Jesus. The practice is a response to His instructions, not a technique that controls Him.

D. Remain open and discerning

God's methods must be tested by His Word. Neither familiarity nor novelty proves that something is from God.

Healing application: Receive biblical prayer with humility and expectancy.

Pastor's appreciation application: Support faithful ministry even when obedience requires more than your personal preference.

Am I willing to obey Scripture when the response feels ordinary or differs from what I expected?

IV. Renew Your Faith: Familiarity Does Not Have to Have the Final Word

Texts: [Mar 6:5-6 NASB95] – 5 And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching.

[Jhn 7:5 NASB95] – 5 For not even His brothers were believing in Him.

[1Co 15:7 NASB95] – 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;

[Jas 1:1 NASB95] – 1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

A. Nazareth's unbelief had real consequences

Mark's sequence is sobering: They recognized familiar details. They took offense. Jesus identified their lack of honor. His miraculous ministry there was hindered. He marveled at their unbelief.

"They were amazed at His ministry; He was amazed at their unbelief."

The central issue was more than knowing His background. It was the unbelief expressed through their rejection.

"Familiarity became contempt, contempt expressed unbelief, and unbelief hindered receiving."

B. A few still received healing

Do not overlook Mark's exception: Jesus healed a few sick people.

"Even in a rejecting community, His healing mercy was still evident."

The text gives us reason to examine our hearts and continue seeking Jesus. It does not authorize us to diagnose every unhealed person as unbelieving or dishonoring a pastor.

C. James illustrates that a familiar relationship can change

John 7:5 reports that Jesus' brothers did not believe in Him.

First Corinthians 15:7 records that the risen Jesus appeared to James.

James 1:1 introduces James as a bondservant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

These passages show a remarkable change. They do not supply every detail of that change, but they support this invitation:

"Someone who once failed to believe can become someone who faithfully serves."

D. Respond with repentance, honor, humility, and obedience

Repent: Ask God to expose contempt and unbelief.

Honor: Appreciate faithful servants and their work.

Receive: Approach Scripture with humility.

Obey: Act upon the biblical truth you hear.

Expect: Continue looking to Jesus with faith.

"I may have heard this before, but I can respond in faith today."

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- **When familiarity becomes contempt, we can reject the servants God sends, dismiss the Word God speaks, and resist the ways God works; hindering our faith and our receiving.**
- Nazareth had proximity to Jesus, but proximity did not produce faith.
- They knew His family. They knew His occupation. They heard His teaching. Yet they resisted Him.
- We can sit under faithful preaching, know our pastor personally, and practice familiar spiritual disciplines while allowing our hearts to become closed.
- Do not let what is familiar become what you dismiss.
    - Honor the servants God sends.
    - Receive the truth God speaks.
    - Obey the instructions God gives.
    - Keep your confidence in Jesus.
- May familiarity deepen our faith instead of diminishing our expectancy.