



Mark 9:14-29

Jesus Heals a Boy Possessed by an Impure Spirit

14 When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. **15** As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

16 “What are you arguing with them about?” he asked.

17 A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. **18** Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

19 “You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

20 So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

21 Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?”

“From childhood,” he answered. **22** “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

23 ““If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”

24 Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

26 The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” **27** But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

28 After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

29 He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”

Preface: Welcome to our LC Bible study in our sermon series “Living God’s Story.” As you know, this year we are working our way through the Bible, from Genesis through Revelation. So fasten your seat belt – it is quite a ride! These LC studies will complement the sermons, often using the same biblical texts, and will help your LC go deeper in personal understanding and application. These italicized portions are meant to resource and help you in leading.

Study’s BIG idea: Jesus’ healing ministry demonstrates not only His supernatural powers but emphasizes the need for faith and prayer.

Possible starter questions (3 min.): Do miracles of healings exist today? Is this part of the naivety of the ancient world? Are we too skeptical in the Age of Post-Enlightenment?

Transitional comment: In today’s passage, Jesus invites us to believe that all things are possible with God. While no one can verify each case for miracles, there are key points we can see in this passage concerning Jesus’ supernatural authority.

(If you haven’t already prayed, pray for the Holy Spirit to lead your study, opening our eyes and hearts.)

O – In your own words, describe the scene here.

O – Why do you think Jesus sounds harsh in response (v. 19)?

I – Jesus is not reacting towards the father but towards the lack of faith in his disciples. What does this show us in terms of Jesus’ humanity and His Divinity?

(The frustration shows us Jesus’ humanity. A “naively optimistic” perspective is not godly. But rather holiness is always fighting for the cause of righteousness. However, Jesus’ next words, “Bring the boy to me,” show us His divine compassion.)

A – In today’s world, we see so much pain and hopelessness. What inspiration and action can we gain from Jesus’ response here?

O – What characteristics and emotions do you pick up on in the father’s response? What can you relate with?

I – It’s understandable that the father is politely skeptical. Describe a time when you prayed to God and used the clause, “if you can.” What other clauses and wordings have we used to cover our lack of belief? What is Jesus saying in response?

I – Some dangerous theology has resulted from misinterpreting these verses. Is belief a condition required for God to act or is Jesus inviting us to believe in His redemptive work? *(There is danger in alluding that God needs us to do something, like exercise faith, in order for Him to work. It infers that God is reliant on us and worse, that He is not sovereign. To be theologically responsible, it’s a better interpretation to see that God invites us to join Him in belief, in the proclamation of the Gospel, and ultimately in the healing and redemptive work of the Kingdom.)*

A – How do you think we should approach the Lord in matters of prayer for healing?
(*Christ-followers ought to pray with faith and expectation unless or until the Lord shows us otherwise.*)

A – How do we as Christ-followers discern the difference between proclaiming “false hope” (that could potentially create more pain) versus proclaiming our hope that God can do anything?

O – What references do you see Mark using in verses 26-27?
(*Mark is foreshadowing the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.*)

O – vv. 28-29 – Typically Jesus would rebuke His disciples for their lack of faith. What do you find striking about His answer?

I – What do you think Jesus is doing here?
(*Though He is clearly frustrated that even his own disciples do not have enough faith (v. 19) He persists in teaching them. Further, He is emphasizing that the power of God is found in the deep need and practice of prayer.*)

A – It seems appropriate to mention that today’s disciples (the Church) could be accused of being “an unbelieving generation.” Where do you see the Church’s blind spots regarding faith?

A – Imagine together what could be if the Church believed in Jesus’ words, “Everything is possible for those who believe.”

Prayer together: *Let us pray for that all would look for ultimate healing in Jesus and let us pray that our faith will grow as we seek to overcome our unbelief.*

Text notes (you can access biblical texts via www.Biblegateway.com)

- a. **Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single night.** Take some time and select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your LIFE Community group. Certain questions work better for certain groups. You are encouraged to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best.
- b. Complement OIA questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- e. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
- f. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.