

DISCUSSION FOCUS

Read (Primary Text): Mark 9:14–29 (Parallels: Matt 17:14–20; Luke 9:37–43)

Supporting Texts: Mark 3:15; 6:7, 13; Matt 4:24; Matt 6:26; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8.

MAIN IDEA: Jesus as the Son of God is sovereign over every situation. In times of confidence and in doubt, we are completely dependent upon Him.

OBSERVE

Read Mark 9:14–29. What argument is taking place when Jesus, Peter, James, and John return from the mountain? *The other disciples were apparently unable to cast a demon out of a boy that was causing seizure-like symptoms and attempting to kill him. Probably the nature of the argument was spiritual authority as Jesus had already authorized the disciples to cast out demons (Mark 3:15; 6:7) and they had proven successful in Mark 6:13. Here, however, somehow it doesn't work when they attempted to drive it out.*

What were some of the symptoms the demon was causing in the boy? *Muteness (v. 17), seizure (v. 18), convulsions (v. 18), foaming at the mouth (v. 18, 20), grinding/gnashing of teeth (v. 18), rigidity (v. 18), thrown into fire/water (v. 22).*

INTERPRET

After briefly skimming through chapter 8 with your eyes, why do you think Jesus was so frustrated here in chapter 9 with the disciples? *It appears that He is frustrated with their unbelief. Just a chapter earlier (also in Galilee), Jesus fed the 4,000 and immediately following, the disciples were discussing with one another that they didn't have any bread. Jesus reminded them of the feeding of the 5,000 earlier and the 4,000 just prior and you can see His frustration in Mark 8:21: "Don't you understand yet?"*

How do you see the father's faith in Jesus? Weak or strong? *At first, it appears very weak, especially with his "if you can do anything..." (v. 22b). Doesn't he know he is saying this to the very face of God?! On the other hand, we see a tension between his understanding of Who Jesus is ("I believe") and his surrounding circumstances ("help my unbelief") (v. 24).*

What does Jesus mean when He says that "this kind can come out by nothing but prayer" (v. 29)? *"This kind" is most likely referring to casting the demon out, but this does not seem to be the real emphasis in this passage. The real issue throughout this chapter has been faith or the lack thereof. Prayer is closely tied to faith in that through prayer, we demonstrate our leaning on the object of our faith. It is acknowledging our dependence on God in all things. The disciples have relied upon their own power and methods of exorcism rather than on Jesus. Prayer is what is needed to realign their reliance.*

RESPOND

What is more important...the amount of faith or the object of our faith? *It appears that even faith the size of a mustard seed would be enough to move mountains. The bigger question is what is the object of our faith? Reflect on what that object is in our own life.*

Do you identify with the father's response ("Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief!"): How can this level of honesty in approaching God help? *We realize that our situations often overshadow our faith. Many times, our intellectual understanding of God needs a bridge to our heart to cling to true faith in light of difficult circumstances. Just as the father did, we need to go to the Lord to help us overcome our fears and doubts.*

APPLY

In what ways does the fact that Jesus has authority even over demonic forces bring you comfort?

What does this passage say about the importance of our prayer life? In what ways have you seen prayer make a difference?

As we wrap up our summer City Groups, what have been some things you have discovered along the way from the Old Testament? As we have begun our time in the Gospels, what connections have you seen between the Old Testament and New Testament about the person of Christ?