

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.^[a]"

Lord Help My Unbelief

The Bible says, "But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord." James 1:6-7 (NIV)

According to the Collins Dictionary and Oxford Languages, **unbelief refers to a lack of belief or faith**, typically due to insufficient evidence, especially in religious or faith-related matters.

Disbelief, in contrast, is the inability or refusal to accept that something is true or real. Incredulity is the state of being unwilling or unable to believe something.

Group Discussion Question: Currently, or in the past, what has caused unbelief in your life? And how did you overcome it?

Mark 9:14-29 Summary: Jesus Heals a Boy Possessed by an Impure Spirit

In this passage, a man brings his son who is possessed by an impure spirit to Jesus' disciples for healing, but they are unable to help. Jesus arrives and is told about the situation. He expresses frustration with the lack of faith around him. The father pleads for Jesus to help if he can. Jesus challenges him to believe, to which the father responds with a mix of belief and doubt. Jesus then commands the impure spirit to leave the boy, causing a dramatic demonic reaction, but ultimately healing him. Later, the disciples asked why they couldn't drive the spirit out. Jesus then explained to his disciples that some challenges can only be overcome through prayer.

Reflecting on the Verses in Mark 9: 14-29

Reflecting on Mark 9:17-19

"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."

Lord Help My Unbelief

Reflection Question: In your opinion, why were the disciples unable to drive out the spirit? If the disciples witnessed Jesus performing prior miracles, why did they still doubt?

Reflecting on Mark 9:21-23

"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."

Reflection Question: What caught Jesus' attention when the father said, "If you can"?

Are there prayers in your life where you've asked God, "If you can"? Is that a powerful or powerless way to approach God?

Reflecting on Mark 9:24-27

"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."

Reflection Question: Why did the father say, "I believe," and "help me overcome my unbelief," in the same sentence?

Lord Help My Unbelief

After the boy's deliverance, he appeared lifeless. What might have occurred in this scenario if Jesus hadn't maintained unwavering belief until the end?

Reflecting on Mark 9:28-29

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."

Reflection Question: Why can some spirits or things only be addressed through prayer?

Similarly, to the father in the story, do you believe your prayers can bring healing to your loved ones?

What issues in your life or your loved ones do you believe can only be resolved through prayer?