

# STRENGTHENS

## MARK 9:14-29

(Prepared by Gene Thompson using LifeWay's ETB materials.)

"No one loves Thanksgiving more than I. But after the delight of a great meal with family and loved ones gathered around a grand dinner table, there's always a stack of dishes to scrape, wash, dry, and stack. **That's reality.**

Return from vacation and guess what's waiting for you? A stack of bills and a backlog of email messages. After the honeymoon, there's marriage and a lifetime of adjustments. After the birth of a child, there's responsibility. After the purchase of a home, there's maintenance. **Reality. Reality. Reality.** That's where we live.

After the disciples experienced the exhilaration and wonder of the Transfiguration (Mk. 9:1-13), they came down from the mountain to face **reality.**"—Charles Swindoll.

1. What happens after we have a "mountain top experience?" (We must come back to reality!)

**Read Mark 9:14-16**

2. How do you think Jesus felt when He came back to reality and the disciples were arguing with the Jewish leaders? (Here we go again! Even Jesus had to come back to reality.)

Reality is where we live!

When Jesus asked His question, a man in the crowd spoke up.

**THE CHALLENGE! Read Mark 9:17-20**

1. Have you ever seen someone with epilepsy have a grand mal seizure? (It can be frightening. The symptoms mimic very closely what was happening to this young boy.)
2. Why couldn't the disciples cast out this demon? (Jesus had given them the power to heal and cast out demons when He sent them out on their mission, and they were successful then. Either that was a temporary situation, or they were trying to cast this demon out by their own power.)
3. What was Jesus' reply to them? (Verse 19)

This is probably an expression of general frustration at the broad lack of acceptance of Him and His message. Jesus expresses both His frustration and disappointment at their unbelief.)

4. What happened when they brought the boy to Jesus? (The demon threw the boy into a seizure.)
5. Why do you think the demon acted this way?
6. Who created this demon (fallen angel)? (Jesus.)
7. What are some challenges that test our faith? (Physical; mental; spiritual; relationships; wayward family members.)
8. Why might people discredit the power of Jesus when others have failed them? (They may think He's just another one who can't help.)

Though some were struggling to accept Jesus' authority, demonic spirits had no such trouble. They always recognized Jesus and His power over them.

**Not all physical illnesses are the result of demons.**

**THE ADMISSION! Read Mark 9:21-24**

Here is a great example of what Satan has come to do.

**Read John 10:10**—He "has come to steal and kill and destroy."

1. Is it a sin to doubt? (NO! We must confess where we are in our belief or unbelief and allow God to help us in our unbelief. Thomas basically told the other disciples "I'm not where you are in my faith yet.")

We must admit our doubts when it comes to faith and trust Jesus to help us mature. Jesus asked the father how long the boy had suffered this way. The question likely was intended to deepen the father's desire to rely on Jesus for help.

2. To what extent was the father transparent with Jesus?
3. When have you felt most desperate?
4. What tone of voice do you think Jesus used when He repeated "If You can!?" (He helped the father see how ridiculous his statement was.)
5. When Jesus said "Everything is possible to the one who believes" was that a blank check for anything we want? (NO)

Remember, the Bible is the best commentary on the Bible.

Read **John 14:13-14** then read **1 John 5:14-15**. We must ask in Jesus' name and that means in accordance with His will.

To pray only when we want something is the utmost in self-centeredness! We can't make demands on God or presume He's just there to fill our requests! We go to Him with genuine concerns that we want to see God's will accomplished.

6. How can a person believe in Jesus and yet lack belief at the same time? (We can believe in Jesus but doubt He can take care of the circumstance we are in right now—it seems hopeless.)

In one sense, it seems like a contradiction, but most of us can relate to what he was saying. While a part of us wants to trust God, another part is always holding out on Him. Thankfully, God understands that, as well. He wants to use our honesty in those moments to teach us more about Him and to deepen our faith in Him.

7. What are some practical steps we can take to strengthen our faith? (It is more about relationships. We need to spend more time in the Scripture and praying to build our relationship with Jesus and the Father.)

## **THE DEMONSTRATION! Read Mark 9:25-29**

1. How did Jesus respond to the father's imperfect faith? (He healed the boy.)

The boy wasn't the only one healed when Jesus drove out the evil spirit. His father was healed too.

Because Jesus drove out the hopelessness that had overtaken him.

The spirit had resisted the disciples, but it could not resist Jesus. In their own authority, the disciples could not overcome this demon. They only could do so as they prayed and sought the power of Jesus.

2. What are some things we might be tempted to do without prayer? (Prepare a SS lesson plan. Fix our kids. Etc.)
3. What are some things that help you trust Jesus, even in difficult circumstances? (His Word. Past victories. Encouragement from other Christians. Etc.)
4. Are all demons equal? (See Matt. 12:43-45 and Eph. 6:12.)

It's difficult to grow in our faith if we don't stay connected to the One who gives us faith and serves as the foundation of our faith.

The emphasis in this passage is not on our ability to have faith, but on God's ability to strengthen our faith through our dependence on Him.

## **CHALLENGE!**

1. What role does our church and our class have in pushing back the works of darkness in our community and individuals who have been affected by the enemy?
2. In what ways are you currently depending on yourself when you should be depending upon Jesus?

“How about you? Would you like to see your doubt-ridden heart healed? Wouldn't you like to rediscover a deep, abiding assurance in the character, goodness, power, and presence of God? Is that even possible? Could God shine His light of hope into you dark, despairing heart? Could God plant a new seed of faith in your dry soil, that barren wasteland inside you? Do you want to believe?”—Craig Groeschel.

Prayer.