

What are ways God has demonstrated His character in your life?

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.

- Mark 9:25-27 NIV

Jesus was willing and able to help the man's unbelief. But his father probably wasn't prepared for the immediate results. When Jesus intervened, the boy appeared to be dead. Sometimes when we invite Jesus to take control, things can get worse before they get better. And it doesn't always end up the way we thought it would.

Part of wrestling with our faith means trusting God even when the circumstances would tell us that isn't working. Has there been a time when you faced something that got worse as you waited and trusted God? How did that experience end and how did it impact your faith?

WRAP-UP

This week's study in Mark's Gospel highlights the tension between spiritual mountaintop experiences and the challenges of everyday life. After witnessing Jesus' transfiguration, Peter, James, and John return with Him to find the other disciples in conflict and a desperate father pleading for his demon-possessed son. The passage reminds us that faith isn't always easy; it's often built in the struggle. Like the father who cried out, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief," we too wrestle with doubts and unanswered prayers. But Jesus meets us in those moments, not to condemn our weakness, but to grow our faith. Whether it's through life's hardships, unanswered questions, or past failures, our faith deepens when we remember God's character, trust Him through the unknown, and hold onto the glimpses of His glory we've already seen.

MEMORY VERSE

23 "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes." - Mark 9:23 NIV

Challenge –

This week face down any doubts that nag at you and bring them honestly before God. Then ask Him to help your unbelief as you rest in His character.

Wrestling with Faith Gospel of Mark Ch. 9 - Week 2

INTRODUCTION

This week, as we follow along in the events of Mark's Gospel we find Peter, James and John returning with Jesus after the transfiguration to the harsh reality of spiritual warfare. The rest of the disciples were in an argument with the scribes and pharisees as a desperate father seeks relief for his demon-possessed son. Sometimes life gets complicated. We can't always live on the mountain tops; we must return to confront the challenges of life in this broken and imperfect world. And there are circumstances we will face that raise doubts in us. But Jesus can handle those doubts and use them to help us to grow our faith.

Ice Breaker

Did you ever trust in something that failed you (like a car that broke down and stranded you)? Were you reluctant to trust it again?

Key Passages

24 Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" - Mark 9:24 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Building Faith

The disciples had experienced moments that built their faith. When Jesus asked them who they said that He was, Peter received a revelation from God and proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah. And when Peter, James and John were on the mountain top with Jesus they beheld His glorious transfiguration and caught a glimpse of Jesus' divine nature.

29 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah." - Mark 8:29 NIV

2 After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. - Mark 9:2 NIV

What are some of the milestones, or significant moments that built up your faith?

1 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. - Hebrews 11:1 NIV

29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." - John 20:29 NIV

By its very nature faith is tied to what is unseen. But Peter, James and John had seen Jesus transformed for an instant. Even though that image was now gone, that glimpse was something for them to remember and hold on to. It strengthened their faith so that they could face the difficult challenges when they left the mountain top. Jesus said blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believe. That blessing belongs to all of us who believe in Jesus and have not yet seen Him. We hold tight to what God has done for us to strengthen our faith in what God will do when we face life's challenges.

2. Life's Challenges

There were nine disciples who didn't see Jesus transfigured. They remained in Caesarea Philippi where the enemy unleashed his schemes to undermine their faith.

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." - Mark 9:14-18 NIV

The scene at the bottom of the mountain included the disciples, teachers of the law, the crowd, the demon-possessed boy and his father. Each group had different needs and different challenges to deal with. Each group felt their own brand of doubt and desperation.

- *The Pharisees were unwilling to relinquish power and prestige that they had been enjoying before Jesus challenged them with something new. What are some of the old familiar things we might similarly struggle to relinquish to Jesus? Are there "harmless habits" Jesus is encouraging you to change?*

- *The father struggled to believe the disciples' (and Jesus') ability to heal as he struggled to hold on to hope for a cure for his son. Have you been torn between hope and doubt during a serious illness? Describe what that was like.*
- *The disciples struggled to carry on Jesus' ministry when He wasn't there. Have you entertained doubts about your faith, or your ability or calling when you failed to see the results you had expected after confronting a crisis?*

Living out a life of faith happens beyond the church walls. Our faith may feel stronger when we are surrounded by other believers in the church pews, but we are also called to live by faith in our own homes and neighborhoods dealing with the everyday struggles that challenge our faith.

What are some of the everyday circumstances that you find challenging to your faith? Relationships, health, finances, politics??? What are the best tools you have to strengthen your faith and bring Jesus into those situations? Share any specific prayer needs with your group.

3. Overcoming Unbelief

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!"

- Mark 9:21-24 NIV

8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

- Psalm 103:8 NIV

There is no mention of the boy's mother. The father alone seems to be carrying the burden of his deaf and mute demon-possessed son. We don't know how old this son was, but the father states he has been this way since he was a little child or infant. This man was exhausted and desperate. But he showed us how to walk our out doubts as Christians.

The father's request was conditional; "if you can". When we face our own "if you can" moments we need to change our focus from looking for God's power in our situation to recalling God's character. The more time we spend with God, the more we experience His character. The Psalmist says God is compassionate, gracious, merciful, loving.