



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V23 N4 January 24, 2021

KING JESUS

“Replenishing the Resource of Faith”

Mark 9:14-29

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Prayer

I pray to God to know him, to lay my requests before him, and to find direction for my daily life.

“God has surely listened and has heard my prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!”

Psalms 66:19-20



How important
are faith and
prayer?

Two verses in Mark's account of Jesus' exorcism of a “deaf and mute spirit” that nine of his disciples could not cast out of a lad have implications for our understanding of prayer. The first contains Jesus' reply to the father's request, “if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us” (8:22). “If you can't?” said Jesus. “*Everything* is possible for one who believes” (v. 23). The second contains Jesus' answer to the disciples' question, “Why couldn't we drive it out?” Jesus replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer” (v. 29). While the second explicitly mentions “prayer,” the first alludes to *belief* or *faith*, essential to answered prayer.

According to Jesus, the one who asks him for help must believe that he is able to help, so by way of analogy, the one who prays for help must believe that God is able to help. One commentator explains: “The phrase, *everything is possible* (*panta dynata*, ‘all things are possible’) refers in 10:27, 14:36 to the omnipotence of God, who has created ‘all things’ and who has the power to do ‘all things’. Jesus asserts that since he acts in God's authority, he can do *everything*: he is not limited by the severity of the boy's condition. Mark probably wants his readers to see both aspects: Jesus asserts that he believes in the One who holds all power and that the all-sufficiency of his faith as the Son gives him the ability to do all things; and Jesus asks the father to surrender his skepticism prompted by the seemingly hopeless situation and to believe that he, Jesus, has the ability to do all things” (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 214). In a nutshell, when we pray, we must believe that God *can* grant our request. However, we need not believe that God *will* grant our request – after all, prayer is no *blank check* that can be written and cashed by us for any amount. The question is not one of God's *ability* but one of God's *willingness*. Our prayers neither hold God hostage to our desires, nor rob him of his sovereignty.

In his excellent book entitled *Prayer: Does it Make Any Difference?*, Philip Yancey asks the intri-

guing question: “What would happen if God answered every prayer?” To which he offers an equally intriguing answer: “By answering every possible prayer, God would in effect abdicate, turning the world over to us to run. History shows how we have handled the limited power granted us . . . What if God gave us automatic access to supernatural power? What further havoc might we wreak?” (228). Remember the outcome of Jim Carrey's decision to simply grant every prayer request he received in the movie *Bruce Almighty*?

According to Jesus, prayer is essential to exorcise demons – but no more so than to live an obedient life. The disciples were given “authority over impure spirits” by Jesus (Mk 6:7; cf., 3:15), and subsequently, “drove out many demons” (6:13) in obedience to his command. Apparently, they exorcised them as he did by commanding the demon to come out. But in case of the boy with the “deaf and mute spirit,” it didn't work. Perhaps they failed because they lost sight of the fact that their ability, like their authority, was *delegated*. Unlike Jesus who had *inherent* authority and power over demons, the disciples had neither; they derived both from him. “In their encounters with demons they always needed to acknowledge their dependence upon God” (Schnabel, 219) in prayer. It seems, however, they lost sight of that. Their past successes speciously convinced them they could operate under their own steam. When Jesus said, “This kind can come out only by prayer,” he had a particular attitude, one of utter dependence upon God, rather than a particular invocation in mind. One commentator writes: “These men seem to have been trusting in their previous experiences or trusting the authority that had been conferred on them instead of depending on Christ and trusting Him to perform the miracle through them” (J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, 261). We need to be reminded that some things obviously cannot be accomplished apart from prayer, and we need to be reminded that, in fact, we can do nothing when it comes to living an obedient life apart from him..

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."

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "overwhelmed" in v. 15.
- Circle "you" and "them" in v. 16.
- Highlight the description of the boy's symptoms in vv. 17b-18, 20, 22.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 18.
- Circle "unbelieving generation" in v. 19.
- Bracket the rhetorical questions in v. 19.
- Underline v. 23.
- Bracket "deaf and mute spirit" in v. 25.
- Circle "this kind" in v. 29.
- Circle "prayer" in v. 29.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Jesus returns from the mountain to a melee. Describe what he *saw* (v. 14).

2. Explain what *precipitated* the melee (vv. 17-18).

3. The possessed boy is described three times (vv. 17-18, 20, 22). What do you infer from his symptoms?

4. Perhaps the boy simply suffered from epilepsy. What do you think?

5. Describe Jesus' *tone*, and explain the *gist* of what he says in verse 19.

6. Explain what "everything is possible" means *in context*.

7. How is it possible for the father to believe and *not* believe at the same time?

8. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 27.

9. The disciples failed to drive out the "deaf and mute spirit." What did they do wrong?

10. **Discussion:** This passage makes much of *faith* and *prayer*. Talk about their relationship to discipleship

Commentary On The Text

Mark's narrative describing the aftermath of the disciples' failed attempt to exorcise a "deaf and mute spirit" from a boy can be divided into four scenes, which are identified and summarized nicely as follows: "The first scene (9:14-19) begins with crowds gathered around the helpless disciples, engaged in a debate, and climaxes in Jesus' lament over this faithless generation. The second scene (9:20-24) brings Jesus face to face with a desperate father and culminates in the man's moving confession of uncertain faith. The third scene (9:25-27) shows faith at work as Jesus drives out a spirit that has tormented the boy and struck him down as dead. The final scene (9:28-29) returns to the disciples' failure to accomplish the exorcism themselves and connects that failure to insufficient prayer" (David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark*, 354).

Scene one sets the stage for what follows. It contains the *inciting incident*, without which there would be no story. Coming down from the mountain with his inner circle of disciples, Jesus sees the other nine, surrounded by a crowd of onlookers, arguing with the teachers of the law. Mark doesn't explain why; even Jesus doesn't know. So as the excited crowd runs to meet him, he asks, "What are you arguing with them about?" And even though his question was likely directed at the disciples, a man in the crowd answers. Apparently, the argument was sparked by the disciples' inability to drive out the impure spirit that possessed the man's son, so it likely had something to do with Jesus' identity as "the Messiah, the Son of God" (1:1) or his message, "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news" (1:15). The skepticism of those involved, the crowd in general and the scribes in particular, explains Jesus' frustration not only with them but also with that whole generation of Jews. He calls it an "unbelieving generation" and laments he has been with them more than long enough for them to see the light. The opening scene also contains a description of the afflicted son's severe symptoms, which sound like the symptoms of epilepsy, but Jesus makes it clear, while the lad's symptoms may be physical, his problem is spiritual. One thing's for sure, the boy's very life is threatened, so Jesus says, "Bring the boy to me."

Scene two contains a short and to-the-point conversation between Jesus and the boy's father. Jesus asks a diagnostic question, "How long has he been like this?" (v. 21). To which the father answers,

"From childhood" and then goes on to identify what appears to him to be the impure spirit's motive. It wants to kill him (v. 21b-22a). Then he makes this desperate plea for help. "If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." Jesus respects the man's doubts. The man must have believed that Jesus could do something for his son; he brought the boy to him in the first place. But now he isn't so sure. One commentator writes: "The inability of the nine disciples to drive out the demon has evidently generated doubt whether Jesus has the ability to heal the boy, whose condition is not only serious but seemingly an extremely difficult case" (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 216). Jesus turns to address the father's doubt, "'If you can?'" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes." The father must believe that Jesus *can* help before Jesus will help. Recognizing his own lack of confidence, the father exclaims, "I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief!" It's the same poignant cry that has resonated with all those who have fought the same battle to overcome doubts over the centuries.

In scene three Jesus does for the boy what the nine disciples could not do. He commands the "deaf and mute spirit" to "come out of him and never enter him again." The demon cannot do otherwise, and Jesus proves he makes the impossible possible. Still, the demon shrieks, and convulses the boy violently on his way out, leaving the lad for dead. But Jesus restores him, lifting the boy to his feet. The disciples are witnesses of this, of course, and it raises the elephant-in-the-room question.

Scene four contains the disciples' question and Jesus' answer. Jesus and his disciples have moved indoors and in private they ask the simple question, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" (v. 28). To which Jesus gives them the simple answer, "This kind can come out only by prayer" (v.29). He's not referring to a particular prayer or incantation that must be said before an exorcism, like grace must be said before meals. He's talking about an attitude of prayer that acknowledges theirs is a delegated authority and a delegated ability to cast out demons. The moment they lose sight of that and attempt to operate in and of themselves apart from their Lord, they fail. Disciples cannot live lives of obedience to Christ apart from a 24-7 dependence on him.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 15 *overwhelmed* Some infer the crowd was overwhelmed by the sight of Jesus' garments that still glistened following the transfiguration, but this is unlikely, "since the demand of secrecy in verse 9 would not make much sense if the experience on the mountain lingered on Jesus' face, visible for all to see" (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 214). "Since Jesus had forbidden Peter, James, and John from speaking about the Transfiguration, it is unlikely that some glorious afterglow caused the crowd's reaction" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Mark," 2020 ed., 193, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf). "The impression one gains from this scene is that Jesus' fame and power are such that he immediately attracts crowds of people, many of them hoping for healing and blessing" (Craig A. Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 34B, *Mark* 8:27-16:20, 50).

v. 16 *you . . . them* Cf., "He asked them, 'What are you arguing about with them?'" (NET, ESV). There are two "them(s)" in this verse, and their antecedents are ambiguous. Perhaps Jesus asked "them," the crowd, what they were arguing with "them," the disciples, about (Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 432), or he asked "them," the other disciples, what they were arguing with "them," the teachers of the law," about. "It is more probable that Jesus is speaking to his disciples, even if someone in the crowd shorts out an answer" (Evans, 50).

vv. 17-18, 20, 22 *possessed . . .* "The demon causes muteness and deafness. In 9:18 the father describes the results of the malady. 'Wherever' (*hopou ean*) the demon attacked the boy, he threw him down on the ground, caused the child to foam at the mouth, grind his teeth, and become rigid. These acts are often symptoms of epilepsy, and Matthew (17:15) may describe the boy as having epilepsy (*selēniazetai*). Yet Mark clearly emphasizes to his readers that the cause of the boy's malady is due to demon possession (9:17-18, 25-26, 28; Evans 2001:52)" (Stein, 433).

v. 19 *unbelieving generation* I.e., unbelieving Jewish people of the day embodied in the crowd and the teachers of the law and to a lesser degree in the boy's father and the disciples (see Schnabel, 215). "The 'unbelieving generation' included the father and the crowd, and possibly the disciples. The nine disciples could not exorcize the demon because of their weak faith (cf. v. 29). Jesus' first rhetorical question expressed frustration that His presence with

them had not resulted in greater faith (cf. 4:40; 6:50, 52; 8:17-21). His second question reveals the heavy load that their unbelief placed on Him (cf. 3:5; 8:12)" (Constable, 193).

v. 25 *You deaf mute spirit* I.e., the spirit caused the boy to be not only mute but also deaf (Stein, 435).

v. 29 *this kind . . . by prayer* "This kind" probably does not imply a particular kind of demon, namely, a "deaf and mute spirit" (v. 25); perhaps it implies a particularly powerful instance of possession. "Jesus' answer to the disciples' question suggests that they did not pray before the exorcism, which they presumably attempted to accomplish with a simple command. The phrase *by prayer* does not prescribe an extended time of intensive prayer but merely states that prayer is necessary. Jesus' point is this: while his personal authority allows him to drive out a demon, even a legion of demons, with a simple word of command, the disciples' authority is delegated authority, which means that in their encounters with demons they always need to acknowledge their dependence upon God by praying that God will help them drive out the demons" (Schnabel, 219).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Faith together with prayer manifested by living 24-7 in dependence on Jesus, is essential to those who want to follow him as obedient disciples.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Oh, the sweet innocence of a preschooler's prayer. They might pray for a friend that said something mean just as easily as they will the dog that lives next door to their grandmother, the beautiful flower they saw or not having broccoli for dinner. Younger kids don't seem to have issues with what words they will use and are generally comfortable praying out loud; in childlike faith they just give it all to God. As kids get older and they become more awkward and socially aware, they seem to lose touch with the ease of simply communicating with God. They clam up when it's time for group prayer, even within your own family. Prayer is our most valuable communication with God. James 5:16 tells us that, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." So how do we give kids the tools to develop this rich spiritual discipline? How do we help them understand that prayer builds intimacy between them and the One who loves them more than any other? Encourage them to talk to God like they're talking to their best friend. Let them know that there are no special words or formulas they need to follow. In fact, they can even use God's Word in their own prayer. Consider getting them a prayer journal or together find a creative tool online. Ask God to give them a desire for prayer. More than anything I encourage you to let them see and hear you as you model prayer within your family. We are praying for you as you seek to develop a passionate prayer life in your kids.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Mark 9:14-29.

1. Describe what was happening with the man's son.
2. How did the man respond to Jesus?
3. Why couldn't the disciples heal the boy?

What Do You Think?

Put verse 24 in your own words and explain what it means.

What Do You Do?

Gather some colors and decide what you'll pray with each color (purple - neighbors, green - environment, yellow - family). Color a picture and spend time praying as you use each color.

CORE COMPETENCY: Prayer

I talk to God so I can know Him, ask Him for things, and find out what He wants me to do.

MEMORY VERSE: Hebrews 12:2a

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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