

WEEK FIVE
JESUS CONNECTION
HEALING A DEMON POSSESSED CHILD

OPENER: Describe a time when you asked someone for help, and it only made the situation worse? What were you expecting them to do? Why were they not able to meet your expectations?

SCENARIO: Jesus, along with Peter, James, and John, are coming down the mountain after the transfiguration, where Moses and Elijah visited from heaven. They see the remaining disciples confused, surrounded by a frustrated crowd.

READ: Mark 9: 14-18

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.”

DISCUSS:

- Why does this man bring his son to Jesus' disciples? What was he expecting them to do?
- What happened instead? Why does this lead to arguments?
- Imagine you are this man. What thoughts and emotions would you have at this moment?
- How would the situation shape his belief and trust in God and himself?

READ: Mark 9: 20-22

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.”

DISCUSS: How desperate do you think this man was to find healing for his son?

READ: Mark 9: 22b-24

“...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!”

DISCUSS:

- The man says, “If you can...” Why do you think he says “if”?
- Jesus repeats back, “If you can?” Why does Jesus highlight this statement?
- Why does Jesus insist that this man believes?
- The man's reply insinuates that he possesses both belief and unbelief, how is that possible?
- Have you ever experienced belief and unbelief simultaneously?
- How does Jesus help overcome unbelief?

QUOTE: Stephen Shoemaker

Life confronts us with brute facts of reality: the brute facts of our own personal limitations, of society's stubborn resistance to transformation, and of life's dark tragedy. A mature faith seeks to trust God and have hope in the midst of these crises as we discover personal self-limitation, the intransigence of society, and the tragic dimensions of life. All of these are tests of mature faith.¹

¹ Shoemaker, Stephen, Psalm 131, pg. 92

DISCUSS:

- What were the “brute facts of reality” that his man faced with his son?
- How did this man show mature faith during the tragic dimensions of life?
- How does his cry to Jesus, “Help me overcome my unbelief” a sign of a mature faith?

READ: Mark 9: 25-27

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.

DISCUSS:

- Jesus healed this man’s son and healed this man’s faith. How do you think this experience shaped this man’s faith and belief?
- How do you think this experience brought calm, quiet, hope, and trust to this man, his son, and those who were watching?

QUOTE: Stephen Shoemaker

Understanding will not lead us to faith. Faith comes first, and from that foundation stone of trust we seek understanding. We can spend the rest of our lives twisting and turning on life's mysteries. Our minds can be continually fretful. The alternative is not the dismissal of understanding. It is trust as the basis of life, the foundation of understanding. Trust is even deeper than what we believe about God. It is a peace that passes understanding.²

DISCUSS:

- Why is faith more important than understanding?
- How might seeking understanding cause damage to your faith?
- How can trusting in God bring peace in a way that understanding cannot.

READ: Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

RETURN:

Go back to the main lesson. Wrap up with the CLOSING TIME prayer or choose an additional option in PATHS FOR THE JOURNEY.

² Ibid, 93