



Today, we're continuing our study of the book of Mark. We've named the series "Unreasonable God" because God has done the unreasonable by going above and beyond in giving us Jesus. Furthermore, God calls us to unreasonable obedience as we follow Him. Throughout the book of Mark, we see this God doing amazing - unreasonable things. Today's story is no different. In Mark 9, we encounter unreasonable warfare through a dramatic scene in which Jesus heals a boy possessed by a powerful unclean spirit, demonstrating His compassion and authority. In these verses, we see the struggles of faith experienced by the boy's father, the disciples, and the crowd gathered to witness this miracle. Jesus' interaction with the father, who cries out, "I believe; help my unbelief," reveals the struggle of genuine faith when facing difficult situations.

Key Passage: Mark 9:14-29

Discussion Questions:

1. What lessons do we learn from this passage regarding demons?
 1. Demons are real – not mythological figures.
 2. Demons are capable of inflicting pain and suffering.
 3. In our own strength, we are helpless against the supernatural powers of the demonic.
 4. Operating in our own strength rather than Christ's power will lead to disappointing results.
 5. We should turn to Christ in prayer in all matters of spiritual warfare. (Akin, 2014)
2. What stands out about the disciples' inability to cast out the unclean spirit? Compare and contrast Mark 9:28 with Mark 6:7-13.

The disciples' inability to cast out the unclean spirit reminds us that past spiritual victories (Mark 6:7-13) can lead to a kind of self-reliance ("Why couldn't we drive the demon out?") rather than faith and reliance on God. The disciples may have operated with self-reliance (disconnected from prayer), which Jesus later emphasized as key. This moment reveals how even those closest to Jesus struggle and need deeper trust and dependence on God.

3. How does the father's statement, "I believe; help my unbelief!" reflect the complexities of faith? How have you found yourself experiencing a similar kind of inner wrestling?

This statement illustrates that faith is often a mix of trust and doubt. It is a humble and vulnerable admission that while the man believes in Jesus' power, he also struggles with doubts. It reveals that faith is not about perfection but bringing our struggles to God. **"The key is not the depth of our faith but the direction of our faith" (Akin, 2014, p. 188).**

4. Why does Jesus emphasize that "this kind can come out only by prayer" (verse 29)? What does this teach about spiritual authority?

"We never advance beyond our need for prayer" (Akin, 2014, p. 189). Jesus' emphasis on prayer points to the necessity of a deep, ongoing relationship with God and **dependence** on Him for spiritual strength. This teaches that spiritual authority and power do not come from techniques or formulas but from a humble connection with God through prayer and faith.

5. What does this passage reveal about Jesus' compassion for our suffering? How does this encourage us?

Jesus' response to the father's plea shows His deep compassion. He doesn't rebuke the father for his wavering faith but meets him where he is, providing healing and hope. It illustrates Jesus' willingness to engage with those in pain, regardless of their level of faith.

6. In what ways does this story encourage us to persist in prayer, especially in difficult situations?

Jesus' teaching that "this kind can come out only by prayer" encourages persistence and devotion in prayer. It suggests that some challenges require consistent and dedicated spiritual practices, showing the importance of perseverance in seeking God's intervention.

"The power of prayer is obviously not going to be experienced if we don't pray. Tim Keller observes that the prayer of the father is characterized by honesty, helplessness, hopefulness, specificity, and passion" (Akin, 2014, p. 190).

7. What does this passage teach about the intersection of human weakness and divine power?

The passage shows that God's divine power and grace meet our weaknesses, doubts, and limitations. Jesus' intervention, despite the disciples' failures and the father's struggles, illustrates that God's strength is made perfect in human weakness, inviting us to rely on Him in our struggles.

8. What about this study has challenged you most? What's your biggest takeaway?