

DEMON-POSSESSED SON HEALED

Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Jesus, the disciples, and the boy's father

Key-location: Valley below the mountain where Jesus experienced his transfiguration

Key-repetitions:

- Disciples' failures: argued with religious scholars (Mk 9:14, 16); couldn't drive out demon (Mk 9:18); lacked faith (Mat 17:17, 20; Mk 9:19); lacked prayer (Mk 9:29).
- Belief/faith: Jesus accused disciples of unbelief (Mk 9:19); Jesus told the father of the demon-possessed boy that everything is possible for him who believes (Mk 9:23); father of the boy confessed both belief and unbelief (Mk 9:24); small faith can move a mountain (Mat 17:20).
- Demon: robbed boy of speech (Mk 9:17); brought convulsions that threw the boy to ground (Mk 9:18); made him foam at the mouth, gnash his teeth, and become rigid (Mk 9:18); tried to kill the boy (Mk 9:22); threw the boy into a convulsion (Mk 9:20); faith and prayer necessary to expel demons (Mat 17:20; Mk 9:29).

Key-attitudes:

- Father's desperation.
- Demon's abusiveness.
- Disciples' frustration.
- Crowd's curiosity.

Initial-situation:

Jesus went on three retreats with his disciples during the first half of his third year of ministry. The first retreat began when Jesus received the news of John the Baptist's death. Jesus got into a boat with his disciples to go to a deserted place. A crowd saw them get into the boat and went on foot around the lake. Jesus performed the miracle of feeding five thousand men. Afterwards, the people wanted to make Jesus king by force. Jesus' refusal to lead revolutionary forces against King Herod was the decisive point that ended his popularity and began a series of painful rejections.

On his second retreat, Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the son of the living God. Jesus foretold of his own death and resurrection. Peter then reprimanded Jesus; however, Jesus called Peter a stumbling block because his thoughts did not come from God.

On his third retreat, the apostles John, James, and Peter were with Jesus on a mountain and witnessed Jesus' transfiguration.

Initial-problem:

Jesus, Peter, James, and John left the mountain. In the valley, a large crowd gathered around the other disciples and the religious scholars were arguing with them.

Final-situation:

Jesus told his disciples, "There's no way to get rid of this kind of demon except by prayer."

BIBLE STORY

Jesus, Peter, James, and John left the mountain where Jesus had experienced his transfiguration. At the bottom of the mountain, they joined the other disciples. A large crowd had gathered around the other disciples. The religious scholars, who were the teachers of the Mosaic Law, were arguing with the other disciples. The people saw Jesus. They were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

Jesus asked his disciples, "What are you arguing about with the religious scholars?"

A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my mute son. A demon robbed my son of his speech. Whenever the demon causes my son to have convulsions, it throws him to the ground. My son foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they couldn't."

Jesus replied, "You unbelieving people! How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

They brought the boy to Jesus. The demon saw Jesus and immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. The boy fell to the ground and he rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has your son been like this?"

The father answered, "From childhood. The demon often throws him into fire or water to kill him. If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

Jesus responded, "If? Everything is possible for him who believes."

Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

Jesus saw that a crowd was closing in on them. Jesus rebuked the demon, "I command you deaf and mute spirit to come out of him, and stay out."

The spirit shrieked, convulsed the boy violently and left. The boy looked like a corpse and many said, "He's dead." But Jesus took the boy's hand and helped him to his feet (Mk 9:14-27).

Jesus went indoors and his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive out the evil spirit?"

Jesus replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. There's no way to get rid of this kind of demon except by prayer" (Mat 17:19-20; Mk 9:28-29).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. While Peter, James, and John were on the mountain with Jesus, what problem did the other nine disciples have?
2. What does the story teach us about demons or evil spirits?
3. What were the father's problems?
4. How could the father both believe and not believe at the same time?
5. How have you dealt with the reality of both believing and unbelieving at the same time?
6. How did Jesus cure the demon-possessed youth?
7. Why had the disciples been unable to cure the demon-possessed youth?
8. How have you experienced a spiritual high mountaintop experience being followed by problems and temptations in the valley?
9. Jesus told the father of the demon-possessed boy that everything is possible for the person who believes. How can we balance the possibilities of Jesus' promise along with reality that God doesn't always do what we ask him to do?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **To seek spiritual highs without seeking to improve the lives of needy people is not God's plan.** The sequence of events from the transfiguration (Mat 17:1-8) and then the youth's cure (Mat 17:14-21) shows a need for service after having a glorious experience with Jesus. To remain on the mountaintop without trying to improve the life of needy people in the valley, is not God's plan.
2. **The believer who lacks faith in God when he faces a problem, will be overcome by the power of Satan.** The disciples's incredulity resulted in their failure to heal the demon-possessed boy, their arguing with the teachers of the Law, the boy remaining demon-possessed, and in the father of the boy continuing in despair (Mat 17:14-20; Mk 9:18, 29). To overcome Satan, the disciple of Jesus must express faith in prayer. The believer needs a deep contact with God through constant prayer.
3. **The follower of Jesus who has little faith, will dishonor him openly when he is in the presence of someone dominated by Satan.** The lack of the disciples' faith, when they were in the presence of the demon-possessed youth, openly dishonored Christ (Mk 9:14-19).

4. **Jesus respects a person's honest confession.** When the father wanted Jesus to cure his demon-possessed son, Jesus said, "Everything is **possible** for him who believes." The father answered, "I do believe. Help me overcome my unbelief" (Mk 9:23-24).
5. **Lack of power controls Jesus' followers when:**
 - **They look for help from people instead of looking to Christ for help.** The father went to the disciples instead of Jesus (Lk 9:40).
 - **They act without faith** (Mat 17:17; Lk 9:41).
 - **Perversity exists in their hearts** (Lk 9:41).
 - **Prayer is lacking** (Mk 9:29).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Interaction with Characters in Story:

Invite listeners to interact with characters in the story with a question. What would you like to tell:

- Peter, James, and John coming down the mountain with Jesus?
- The religious scholars who were arguing with Jesus' disciples?
- The nine disciples who couldn't heal the demon-possessed boy?
- The boy's father who is disillusioned over the disciples' failure?