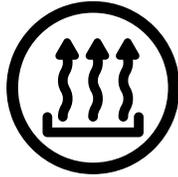




The Gospel of Mark



WARM-UP

In your opinion, what movie has the best plot twist?



What happened last time in Mark 8?

Possible Answers: Jesus does his second miraculous feeding, classically confronts the Pharisees, heals a blind man in part and then in full, Peter declares Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus predicts his own death and invites his disciples to follow the way of the cross.

Read out loud as a group

MARK 9:1-13 (NIV)

¹ And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."

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. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

⁵ Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

⁷ Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰ They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant.

¹¹ And they asked him, "Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"

¹² Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? ¹³ But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him."



What stands out to you?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary.



Moses represents the Law and Elijah represents the Prophets. Here Jesus is surrounded by the Law and the Prophets. This connects to what Jesus says in Matthew 5:17 about having come not to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill them. How is it different that Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets not abolishes them?

Possible Answers: abolish would mean we don't have to consider them at all and it would mean that this was a back up plan. Fulfilling means the Law and the Prophets always pointed to Jesus, that Jesus is and was always the 1st plan, Jesus is the pinnacle/the culmination of the whole of scripture, not a last resort. Jesus is the answer.



Jesus does not answer Peter's scrambled question but God does with the cloud, declaration of sonship, and disappearance of Moses and Elijah. God's answer is a reminder that Jesus is not on the same level as Moses and Elijah, but rather that Jesus is the Son of God. In what ways are we tempted to put things on the same level as Christ?

Possible Answers: Will vary. Things that are good often can creep up to feel like they have the same level of importance: justice, mercy, good works, even marriage or earthly comforts, etc.



Where else in the bible do we see a cloud coming and overshadowing? What do they have in common and what might this communicate about God?

Possible Answers: Pillar of cloud by day to guide the Israelites in the wilderness, God spoke to the Israelites from a cloud (Ex 16), from cloud that God met with Moses and others (Ex 19,24), cloud appeared to Solomon when the temple was dedicated (1 Kings 8, 2 Chron. 5), Jesus' ascension (Acts 1:9), Jesus' return (Luke 21:27). Communicates: God's otherness, holiness and brilliance. A reminder that He is beautiful and we sinners cannot stand in His presence. The cloud seems to be a way that God shields himself for our protection yet continues to meet with us.



God's voice coming from the cloud is very similar to what God says when Jesus is Baptized in Mark 1 with the addition of "listen to him". Why do you think listening was emphasized?

Possible Answers: because Jesus was teaching and telling the disciples outright of his death and things to come. God commanding them to listen to Jesus shows Jesus' authority and equal standing with God. It was a command for obedience but also something more: to look to the brilliance of Christ.

Read out loud as a group

MARK 9:14-29 (NIV)

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.”



List out the groups of people Jesus encounters in this passage, what they are doing, and what Jesus does for each group.

Possible Answers: People Jesus encounters: other disciples having failed to cast out a demon from a boy and now arguing with scribes/religious leaders, a crowd watching the encounters, a desperate father pleading for his son, the demon possessed son who causes a fit of convulsions as Jesus approaches. What Jesus does: asks questions, comforts and encourages the father, frees the son, instructs the disciples, silences the scribes/religious leaders.

Read out loud as a group

“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief: The poor father in this account was challenged by Jesus’ exhortation for faith. He did believe in Jesus’ power to deliver his boy – after all, why else would he have come to Jesus? But he also recognized his doubts. So, he tearfully plead with Jesus: Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!

- In this case, the man’s unbelief was not a rebellion against or a rejection of God’s promise. He did not deny God’s promise; he desired it. However, it just seemed too good to be true. Thus he said, “help my unbelief!”
- Help my unbelief is something a man can only say by faith. “While men have no faith, they are unconscious of their unbelief; but, as soon as they get a little faith, then they begin to be conscious of the greatness of their unbelief.” (Spurgeon)
 - Study Guide for Mark 9 by David Guzik



How do we as a small group help each other when we’re experiencing unbelief?

Possible Answers: will vary. Listen, ask questions, be present, don’t shame, remind of biblical truths, encourage, give time, love and extend friendship.



The Spurgeon quote brings confidence when we experience unbelief. How might this encouragement change our ideas of perfectionism in faith?

Possible Answers: reminds us that there is no “arriving”, that through sanctification we will always be learning and growing in this lifetime, that even being able to see unbelief is a sign that there is belief!

Read out loud as a group

“This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting: It isn’t that prayer and fasting make us more worthy to cast out demons. It is that prayer and fasting draw us closer to the heart of God, and they put us more in line with His power. They are an expression of our total dependence on Him.

- Jesus already gave them the authority to cast out demons (Mark 3:14-15). Yet, “The authority that Jesus had given them was effective only if exercised by faith, but faith must be cultivated through spiritual discipline and devotion.” (Wiersbe)
- This total dependence on God is the remedy for many spiritual problems. To be disappointed in yourself is to have trusted in yourself.
 - Study Guide for Mark 9 by David Guzik



What might our culture say about dependence? What is your response to the idea of dependence?

Possible Answers: Culture- says mostly that you shouldn't be dependent on anything but need to be completely independent and pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps, dependence is even seen as weak. Personal responses may vary but could be- self-reliance means of protecting ourselves from being let down, seems like the "adult" thing to do, scary, unburdening, relieving, etc.

DISCUSSION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY



- What is one way you can be dependent on God this week?
- What might seem "too good to be true" for you today?
- What would begin to change in your life if you truly believed that dependence, not competence, is the measure of spiritual health?