

Explore the Bible: Strengthens

October 3, 2023

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Oct. 15 focuses on Mark 9:17-29.*

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Bible lessons like this one have been an important part of the Baptist Standard for many years. Each has a cost of at least **\$50** to produce. To ensure these lessons continue to be provided the rest of 2023 and into 2024, you can **make a donation** in any amount by visiting [our donation page](#). In the comments field, note your donation is toward the cost of Bible studies.*

This Bible passage's subject matter may be more than a child is ready to hear. Consider the maturity of children in the class and downplay the adult elements as needed to protect the child.

Transfiguration on the Mountain (Mark 9:2-9)

Jesus invites Peter, James and John to join him on a mountain. Once there, Jesus' face shines brightly from within; his clothes dazzling white. Elijah and Moses, splendidly dressed, appear to talk with Jesus about his imminent departure in Jerusalem. God the Father appears in a cloud. God speaks of his love for his Son, and he asks the disciples to listen to him. Peter, James and John witness, for us, that Jesus is far more than his human body. He is the Son of God, full of light and love, ready to be our Savior and complete God's redemption plan.

Descending the mountain, Jesus orders; "Don't speak of today {transfiguration} before the Son of Man rises from the dead."

Rejoining other disciples (Mark 9:14-19)

Jesus and the three disciples are soon jolted back into everyday life as they find the other disciples, surrounded by a large crowd and debating with teachers of the law. Jesus asks why they are arguing.

A man in the crowd responds: “Teacher, I brought you my son, possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. It seizes him, throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid.”

The man tells Jesus his disciples tried and failed to drive out the evil spirit.

Jesus chooses to see the man’s son for himself.

“If you can” (Mark 9:20-23)

The father brings his son to Jesus in a private place. When the evil spirit sees Jesus, it throws the boy to the ground in a seizure.

Jesus asks “How long has he been like this?”

The man responds, “From childhood, and it has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him.”

“Often” reveals the pernicious impact of the evil spirit on the boy and the family. If the son suffered from epilepsy alone, the family might have protected him from repeated hazards. The “evil spirit” made the boy self-destructive and vulnerable. The community may have seen this as “neglect” by the family.

Jesus and the father watch the boy convulse on the ground. “But,” the man says to Jesus, “*if you can* do anything, feel sorry for us and help us.”

The man was hoping—a hope that energized him to seek out Jesus. Jesus, in the man’s current mindset, is a real possibility for healing.

“If you can?” Jesus repeats.

It is easy to judge the father for not boldly trusting Jesus. His family knows no one will rescue them. They are not people of privilege. The boy is theirs. Every crisis is theirs; every injury. Every setback means they must pick up the pieces and start again. They love the boy so much, they will try again.

They are beaten down. After so many disappointments; so many mornings when the family had to start again with a new recovery regimen; it takes a toll. They love the boy. Yes, they pray for him (and themselves) more than we can imagine.

Decision time (Mark 9:23-24)

“Everything is possible if you believe,” Jesus nudges the father.

The man sees the inner shining of Jesus’ face which still glows from the mountain. His son is on the ground moaning because an evil spirit did not want to meet Jesus today.

Jesus waits, not pressing the man.

Immediately, the father lets go. “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

Strength enough to trust (Mark 9:25-27)

Jesus sees the crowd running toward their “up to now” private spot. He rebukes the impure spirit. Perhaps Jesus even hastens the timing of the

miracle to give the father some clarity before the crowd intrudes and begins to distort the moment.

The spirit screams, throws the boy into another convulsion and comes out. The crowd assumes the boy is dead, but Jesus lifts him to his feet.

We do not know what happens next. Hopefully, the man's strength as a committed father and his example aid the boy in recovery. The father will tell his son about Jesus often, crediting Jesus for the boy's health and growth. As Jesus' church grows in the decades ahead, the two will be encountered again by Jesus. Next time it will be disciples of Jesus, equipped by the Holy Spirit; probably none of the original Twelve, but disciples nonetheless.

"Everything is possible if you believe."

Glen Funderburk has taught children's Sunday school for many years. These lessons on the Gospel of Mark are written from the perspective of children.