

# WHY DON'T WE PRIORITIZE PRAYER?

MARK 9:14-29

CHURCH GROUP SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE - JANUARY 15, 2023

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## SCRIPTURE READING

*Mark 9:14-29 ESV*

*Jesus Heals a Boy with an Unclean Spirit*

14 And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. 15 And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed, and ran up to him and greeted him. 16 And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" 17 And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. 18 And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So, I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." 19 And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." 20 And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. 21 And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. 22 And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." 23 And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" 25 And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." 26 And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. 28 And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" 29 And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

## SERMON RECAP

God has given us direct access to His divine power, and He wants us to take hold of that power through prayer. But, before we can experience the wonder and power of God through prayer, we first have to be honest about why we struggle with prayer to begin with. There's no revival without honesty.

Why don't we prioritize prayer?

1. We're afraid of getting our hopes up.
2. We're afraid of our doubts.
3. We're afraid of silence.
4. We're afraid of selfish motives.
5. We're afraid of bothering God.
6. We're afraid of rejection.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*What does the passage say?*

1. Read Mark 9:14-29 aloud as a group. Take some time to let group members share observations about the passage. Try not to move into interpretation of the passage or application of what you have read quite yet. Simply share what you all observe from the text.
2. How would you explain or summarize today's passage in your own words?

*What does the passage mean?*

1. Read Mark 9:14-19. Jesus addressed a member of the crowd who sought Jesus' help for his son who had a spirit that made him mute. Jesus' disciples were unable to cast the spirit out, despite their authority to do so (Mark 9:18; cf. Mark 6:7, Matthew 10:1). Why were Jesus' disciples unable to realize the authority and power they had been given?
2. What was Jesus' response to His disciples (Mark 9:19; cf. John 14:9, John 20:27)? What might His response reveal about His character? What might it reveal about His relationship with the disciples?

3. What specific action did the disciples take in response to Jesus' invitation to bring the boy to Him (Mark 9:20)? What response from the unclean spirit resulted from their action, and what caused this result? What might be the significance of this? What might this reveal about Jesus' power and authority?
4. Read Mark 9:21-22 and 24. How would you characterize the nature of the relationship between the father and the son portrayed in this text? How would you characterize the nature of the relationship between the father and Jesus?
5. What was Jesus' response to the father and his son (Mark 9:23, 25-27)? In this text and its immediate context, who might have been impacted by Jesus' work? What might this reveal about Jesus' character, authority and purpose?
6. What did the disciples do when they realized that their work was ineffectual, but Jesus' work prevailed (Mark 9:28-29)?
7. Keeping your previous reflections in mind, read Mark 9:28-29. In Jesus' private response to His disciples' question, why might He have pointed them solely to prayer (and, in some manuscripts, fasting) as the differentiator?

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS

### *How can we apply these passage to our lives?*

*For today's session, break into small gender-specific groups of 2-4 people (we sometimes call these groups huddles).*

1. Honestly reflect on and confess your view of the LORD.
  - What is your image of God? In your inmost thoughts, how do you feel about (and what do you believe about) the LORD?
  - What is your greatest fear or doubt about the LORD? For example, what do you fear or doubt about who He is, what His heart is toward you, or what your relationship and standing in Him is?
  - How might your fears or doubts impact your will and desire to pray to the LORD? How might it shape the nature of your prayers?
2. Honestly reflect on and confess the place and priority of prayer in your life.
  - What encourages your willingness and desire to pray? What challenges your willingness or desire to pray?
  - What might be some consequences of prayerlessness in your life and the lives of others around you?
  - How do you view and respond to prayers that seem to go unanswered?
3. Reread Mark 9:24. Then, take time to pray to the LORD and openly express your belief, questions, fears and doubts about Him and His invitation to pray, and your desire (or lack thereof) for relationship with Him. Don't leave tonight before you take time to pray. Come before the LORD and allow Him to meet you right where we are.

## LEADER NOTES

### *Church Group Leaders, please share the following information with your Church Group:*

1. Looking to serve? Check out [mcleanbible.org/localoutreach](http://mcleanbible.org/localoutreach) for ideas and to register your event, or contact us at [localoutreach@mcleanbible.org](mailto:localoutreach@mcleanbible.org) for additional assistance.
2. Please try and make a point to REALLY promote trips these in the next two weeks (Note: Most applications will close the next month).

2023 Trips -MBC sends short-term teams to help fuel the spread of the gospel among all nations. We invite all MBC members to consider joining a short-term trip. Applications are now open for

late spring and early summer trips to the Arabian Peninsula, Central Asia, France, Italy, the Middle East, and more! Visit [mcleanbible.org/globaloutreach](https://mcleanbible.org/globaloutreach) to see open trips and apply today!