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Mark 9:2-50

Belief and Unbelief

In the midst of daily work and ministry, Jesus continues to reveal more of himself to his often-surprised disciples. Read these incidents carefully. What do you learn about Jesus' identity, his future, and his power? Look for what he teaches about true greatness and about the seriousness of sin.

Read Mark 9:2-13

1. If you were Peter, how would you describe this event known as the transfiguration?
2. How would the transfiguration confirm to the disciples the rightness of their confession in Mark 8:29?

Note: To the Jews, Moses was the giver of God's laws. Elijah represented the Old Testament prophets.

3. What time limit does Jesus set on the command he gives the three?

What two questions do they have?

They refer to the authority of the scribes in their second question. To what authority and to what subject does Jesus direct them in his answer?

4. To what authority should you direct those who question you on theological matters?

Note: See Matthew 17:10-13 for Jesus' comments on Elijah.

Read Mark 9:14-29

5. During Jesus' time on the mountain with Peter, James, and John, what is happening to the other disciples?
6. How has the disciples' failure affected this father's faith (verses 17-18, 22)?
7. Why do you think Jesus discusses the boy's condition with the father?

How does the father respond to Jesus' challenge to believe him?

8. What is Jesus able to do in spite of the father's mixture of faith and unbelief?

What encouragement does this give you?

9. According to Jesus' diagnosis, why were the disciples unable to handle this situation (verses 19, 29)?

What had they done instead of praying (verse 14)?

Rather than arguing about reasons for your ineffectiveness, what can you do (verses 28-29)?

Read Mark 9:30-41

10. Why does Jesus wish to keep his travels secret at this point?

What is the reaction of the disciples to Jesus' teaching?

11. What different subjects concern Jesus (verse 31) and the disciples (verses 33-34)?

Why are the disciples quiet when Jesus inquires about their arguing?

12. What does Jesus want his disciples to understand about true greatness (verses 35-37)?

How does this fit with your idea of greatness?

What does it mean to receive someone in Jesus' name?

13. What further insight does John's comment give you into the disciples' attitudes (verse 38)?

How may the incident with the deaf and dumb spirit have contributed to their attitude?

14. What is the point of Jesus' response to John?

What does Jesus teach about God's evaluation of deeds?

15. What does it mean to do something in Jesus' name today (verses 35-39, 41)?

Read Mark 9:42-50

16. In the four comparative statements, what is better than what (verses 42-47)?
17. In today's society, how may a person cause a new believer or a child to sin?
18. How can one's hand or foot or eye cause him or her to sin?

If sin is this serious, what can you do to control your hands, feet, and eyes?

19. What are the purposes and value of salt?

How would being like salt help the disciples be at peace with each other (verse 50) rather than arguing about who is the greatest (verse 34)?

SUMMARY

1. In this chapter, what do you learn about Jesus?
2. What do you learn about the disciples?

CONCLUSION

This chapter contrasts the mind of Jesus and the mind of the disciples, a contrast that emphasizes how alone Jesus was as he faced the cross. The disciples reflect our own experiences. As followers of Jesus we lack understanding. We put confidence in religious leaders rather than in Scripture. We are frustrated and defensive when we lack power spiritually and are fearful and concerned for our own position.