



**A BETTER
WORD**

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A Study Through the Life of King Jesus | with Pastor Nick Gatzke

Help Me In My Unbelief

Mark 9:14–29

THE BIG IDEA

Faith that Jesus can do anything leads to him accomplishing what he has promised — and self-reliance is a form of unbelief with no spiritual power.

SERMON SUMMARY

Peter, James, and John came down from the mountaintop glory of the transfiguration straight into a street fight. The other nine disciples were arguing with the scribes, a crowd was jeering, and a father stood there with a demon-possessed son they had failed to help. Jesus walks into the middle of it and diagnoses the problem in one word: unbelief — not the scribes', but his own disciples', who had done this work before and had begun relying on their own skill instead of his power.

The father's faith hung by a thread: "If you can do anything, have compassion on us." Jesus turns it back — "If you can! All things are possible for the one who believes" — and the man cries out the honest prayer of a fragile but real faith. Jesus casts out the demon and lifts the boy up. Asked privately why they failed, he says this kind comes out only by prayer, the expression of dependence. They had forgotten to pray.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. The disciples had already been sent out with authority over unclean spirits in Mark 6:7, and verse 13 says they cast out many demons. What changed between that success and this failure? Why does Jesus aim his frustration at his own disciples?
2. Pastor Nick told of a pastor pushing a heavy desk while his four-year-old son pushed alongside him — until the boy turned and said, "Dad, you're in my way," convinced he was doing all the work. Where are you tempted to think you're doing the heavy lifting in your life?
3. Jesus treats self-reliance as a form of unbelief, and Kent Hughes observes that Satan endeavors to disfigure the image of God in humankind. How do a cosmic battle and quiet self-sufficiency fit together here?
4. "All things are possible for the one who believes" is among the most abused verses in Scripture. Pastor Nick told of a woman who refused treatable care believing she needed only enough faith, and died. What is Jesus actually promising here?
5. The father prays, "I believe; help my unbelief." His faith was not strong, but it was there. In your own life, where would that statement of unbelief be the most honest prayer you could pray?

LIVING IT OUT

There is a sin of over-application — demanding what God never promised. But there is a far more common sin of under-application: quietly believing Jesus is too distant to care, the task too hard, the disease too advanced, the person too lost.

Heart Check: Take a temperature check on your prayer life. What you pray about and how often reveals how dependent on God you actually are. Where have you been telling yourself, “If I just work harder, I’ll figure this out”?

This Week: Name one area — a ministry, a relationship, a conversation you keep planning — where you have been operating on skill instead of dependence. Pray about it before you do the work this week, then ask God plainly for what only he can accomplish.

REFLECTION & PRAYER

“And Jesus said to him, ‘If you can! All things are possible for the one who believes.’ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, ‘I believe; help my unbelief!’”

— **Mark 9:23–24**

Tell God honestly where your belief and your experience are not lining up. Ask him to bring you out of self-reliance into complete dependence — and to help your unbelief.

Your Prayer:

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