

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: April 14, 2019
Lesson Title: "Commands"
Lesson Passage: Mark 9:14-27

ABOUT THIS LESSON

After their exalted experience on the Mount of Transfiguration (described in Mark 9:2-8), Jesus led Peter, James and John back down the mountain (Mark 9:9a) to rejoin the nine disciples he had left on the plain. A large crowd had gathered, including a number of scribes from Jerusalem, who were questioning Jesus' disciples. When Jesus asked what they were discussing, the father of an epileptic boy came forward and said that Jesus' disciples had not been able to do anything about the boy's condition. Hearing this, Jesus reproached them for their lack of faith; then, after the boy's father assured him that he had at least a modicum of faith, Jesus healed his son's epilepsy.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Describe the circumstances that led Jesus to rebuke his disciples for their lack of faith. (2) Describe the spiritual condition of the afflicted boy's father, in relationship to his faith.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

To begin the lesson, ask this: If you were to say of a person, "He or she is the best Christian I know," what would lead you to that conclusion? What personal characteristics would that person have? (No doubt, class members will name Christian virtues like honesty, faith, kindness, love, humility, prayerfulness, generosity and compassion.) Then say: As Christians, we all try to cultivate these virtues, but we probably would not claim to have achieved them completely. Then make this point: For example, faith is an essential element in the life of a Christian; but, like love, kindness and generosity, faith is not an "all or nothing" virtue. Jesus himself spoke of "great faith" (Matt. 15:28; Luke 7:9) and "little faith" (Matt. 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; Luke 12:28). And in this week's lesson we find evidence that faith can be present in varying degrees when a troubled father says to Jesus, "I believe; (but) help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Describe the scene that confronted Jesus and the three disciples who had witnessed the transfiguration when they came down from the mountain (Mk. 9:14-1): (1) In contrast to the solitude of the mountain, they walked into a jostling crowd surrounding the nine disciples who had stayed behind. They were locked into an argument with a group of scribes, the ever-present "truth squad" sent by the religious authorities in Jerusalem. (2) Those scribes probably were criticizing and nagging the nine disciples because of their failure to cure the epileptic boy. (3) Jesus had become a celebrity in this region, because of his miraculous healings; so, the people began running to welcome him when he suddenly appeared (v. 15). And, when he arrived, he immediately asked what the argument was about (v. 16).

2. Jesus' question ("What are you discussing with them?") apparently was addressed to the disciples; but the response came from an afflicted boy's father, who stepped forward and answered (v. 17). His son's symptoms (described in verses 18, 22 and 26) are explained as due to an evil spirit; but, today, we might say that the boy was a victim of epilepsy. In any case, the disciples Jesus had left behind had been unsuccessful in their attempts to heal the lad (v. 18).

3. Interpret Jesus' response to the inability of his disciples to cope with the boy's problem:

(1) They should have been able to deal with the emergency; for we are told in Mark 6:7 that, at an earlier time, Jesus had given them authority over the unclean spirits, and they had succeeded in "casting out many demons" (Mk. 6:13). Their failure to cope with the situation on this occasion was simply a lack of faith ("O faithless generation," v. 19). NOTE: Jesus' word "faith-less" did not mean "unfaithful" or "disloyal," as it often means to-day. He meant that they had failed to believe in his power to heal, the divine power he had already bequeathed to them. (2) He did not indict only the disciples for their lack of faith; he reproached their whole generation for this shortcoming (v. 19).

4. Comment on the rest of the narrative in Mark 9:19b-27:

(1) It is significant that Jesus refused to become involved in the argument that was taking place between his disciples and the scribes. He simply said, "Bring him (the afflicted boy) to me" (v. 19b). (2) He then inquired about the duration of the malady of the boy, who was suffering terrible convulsions at the moment (vv. 20-21); and he was told that the lad had experienced these symptoms since childhood (v. 21). (3) The boy's father implied that his faith in Jesus' healing power was not rock-solid, for he begged, "if you can do anything, help us" (v. 22). (4) Calling attention to the father's doubt, Jesus repeated the phrase, "If you can!" and challenged him to exercise complete faith (v. 23). The father then confessed, "I believe; help my unbelief" (v. 24). (5) The crowd was still gathering (v. 15) when Jesus cured him permanently (v. 25). The lad fell into a coma, but revived when Jesus took him by the hand (v. 27).

CLOSING THE LESSON

A closing comment: "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."
(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Lucien Coleman PO Box 2951, Weatherford TX 76086 682-262-1312