


Powerful Faith | Precepts for Living® Online

Teaching Tips

March 6, 2016

Bible Study Guide 1

Words You Should Know

A. Believe ([Mark 9:23](#)) *pisteuo* (Gk.)—To be persuaded by and confident in a certain object or person. 

B. Unbelief (v. 24) *apistia* (Gk.)—Lack of faith, trust or confidence in a certain object or person.


Teacher Preparation

Unifying Principle—Flame and Flood. It is commonly accepted that people are able to accomplish great tasks only by believing in themselves. How can people believe they can do great things? Jesus encouraged His disciples to believe that with His help, they could achieve great things, then demonstrated that by casting out a boy's evil spirit.

A. Pray for clarity and application, for you and your students.

B. Thoroughly study the companion lesson in the *Precepts for Living*® Personal Study Guide.

C. Ask God to reveal areas in your own life where you have lacked faith and not trusted Him.

D. Confess and pray about these areas, fasting as God leads. Be ready to discuss briefly the concept of fasting ([Matthew 4:1–11](#); [Acts 13:1–2](#)). 

O—Open the Lesson

A. Introduce today's lesson title and Aim for Change. Pray for changed hearts.

B. Have students read the Keep in Mind verse and In Focus story.

C. Ask students to share different areas where they lacked faith and have not trusted God. 

P—Present the Scriptures

A. Have students read the Focal Verses (aloud or silently), encouraging them to keep in mind the information presented in The People, Places, and Times and Background.

B. Discuss The People, Places and Times; Background; In Depth; and Search the Scriptures sections.

E—Explore the Meaning

A. As a class, consider the questions in Discuss the Meaning.

B. Read Lesson in Our Society and discuss ways that we see the effects of lack of faith in our churches and individual lives.

N—Next Steps for Application

A. Read Make It Happen and re-read the Aim for Change aloud.

B. Pray with students that they will trust God with the circumstances they listed at the beginning of class.

Worship Guide

For the Superintendent or Teacher

Theme: Powerful Faith

Song: “Because He Lives”

Devotional Reading: [Genesis 50:15–21](#)



Powerful Faith

Bible Background • [MARK 9:14–29](#)



Printed Text • [MARK 9:14–29](#) | **Devotional Reading** • [GENESIS 50:15–21](#)



Aim for Change



By the end of the lesson, we will: **RECALL** the disciples’ attempt to heal a demon-possessed child and Jesus’ later success in doing so; **CONTEMPLATE** what faith it takes to use the power of Jesus Christ to minister to others; and **BELIEVE** our prayers have real power.

In Focus

Rita was ill for the first three years of her marriage. Multiple trips to several doctors’ offices proved unfruitful. There was no clear diagnosis for her ailment, and therefore, no effective treatment. She had taken 14 different medications, and altered her diet—all to no avail. Rita and her husband, Chris, even sought out alternative options—nutritional counselors, homeopathic remedies, etc. While she felt “better,” she was still not healed. Finally, partially in frustration but mostly in desperation, Chris recommended that they fast and pray together for her healing. Rita agreed. Up until this point, she had prayed for healing, but each unproductive trip to the doctor and each ineffective medication left her not only frustrated, but hopeless. She decided to trust God anyway, realizing that her healing would only come from Him. So they fasted and prayed. One week later, Rita realized she was no longer plagued by her symptoms. Four years later, she is still completely healed from her ailments.

We all struggle with faith when faced with seemingly impossible situations. Can you recall a time when you needed powerful faith?

Keep in Mind

“And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting” ([Mark 9:29](#)).



Focal Verses

KJV

Mark 9:14 And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.



15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.

16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?

17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

22 And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

26 And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.

27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.

28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?

29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

NLT

Mark 9:14 When they returned to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd surrounding them, and some teachers of religious law were arguing with them.



15 When the crowd saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with awe, and they ran to greet him.

16 “What is all this arguing about?” Jesus asked.

17 One of the men in the crowd spoke up and said, “Teacher, I brought my son so you could heal him. He is possessed by an evil spirit that won’t let him talk.

18 And whenever this spirit seizes him, it throws him violently to the ground. Then he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast out the evil spirit, but they couldn't do it."

19 Jesus said to them, "You faithless people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

20 So they brought the boy. But when the evil spirit saw Jesus, it threw the child into a violent convulsion, and he fell to the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth.

21 "How long has this been happening?" Jesus asked the boy's father. He replied, "Since he was a little boy.

22 The spirit often throws him into the fire or into water, trying to kill him. Have mercy on us and help us, if you can."

23 "What do you mean, 'If I can'?" Jesus asked. "Anything is possible if a person believes."

24 The father instantly cried out, "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!"

25 When Jesus saw that the crowd of onlookers was growing, he rebuked the evil spirit. "Listen, you spirit that makes this boy unable to hear and speak," he said. "I command you to come out of this child and never enter him again!"

26 Then the spirit screamed and threw the boy into another violent convulsion and left him. The boy appeared to be dead. A murmur ran through the crowd as people said, "He's dead."

27 But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him to his feet, and he stood up.

28 Afterward, when Jesus was alone in the house with his disciples, they asked him, "Why couldn't we cast out that evil spirit?"

29 Jesus replied, "This kind can be cast out only by prayer."

The People, Places, and Times

Scribes and teachers of religious law. The scribes and teachers of religious law were primarily Pharisees. They were the religious and moral authorities during Jesus' time, considered the experts and protectors of the Law of Moses, and highly regarded by common Jews. In fact, the previous passage ([Mark 9:2–13](#)) records three of Jesus' disciples asking Him questions about the scribes' teachings on Elijah, indicating that they also viewed these teachers as religious experts. Throughout the Gospels, scribes (lawyers, teachers of the Law) are often Christ's antagonists, questioning Him, challenging His authority, and seeking to discourage His followers. They are often portrayed as arrogant, unbelieving, and hypocritical.

Demon possession. Demon possession means a person is under the influence or power of one or more demons (fallen angels) who reside within him or her, causing disorder. Such possession was a prevalent and grim reality during Christ's times. Mark's Gospel states, "So Jesus healed many people who were sick with various diseases, and he cast out many demons" (from 1:34, NLT). Several Scriptures record instances of individuals being possessed by demons to the point where the person has no control of his or her actions. Jesus confronts and rebukes these demons, some who caused abnormal mental behavior (such as the man with unusual strength who would cut himself with stones; see [Mark 5:1–20](#)), others who caused physical illnesses, and others who, as in this case, caused both (deafness, muteness, and seizures).

Background

The events in this passage occur immediately after the Transfiguration, when Jesus led Peter, James, and John up a mountain, transformed before them, and spoke with Moses and Elijah, who appeared in their presence ([Mark 9:2–4](#)). The Transfiguration revealed more of Christ's deity, purpose, power, and fulfillment of both the Law and prophecy.

Jesus was answering a question related to the scribes' teachings about Elijah when the events in verses 14–29 begin. The glory, power, and magnificence of the Transfiguration (which left the three disciples speechless in fear) are in direct contrast to the chaotic scene that follows.

Christ is the Son of God, and holds ultimate authority in all things. Mark intentionally reveals this truth by recording several of Christ's miracles. Yet Jesus was constantly (and unsuccessfully) being challenged, as people struggled or refused to believe in Him. The scribes, considered religious experts, likely knew much more about the Law and the prophets than Christ's disciples, who were Jewish commoners from various walks of life. As a result, the disciples would have had no authority over the common man, especially in religious matters. Christ had given them authority, yet the disciples were ineffective and the father's accusation of their inability to demonstrate God's power threatened to undermine their credibility.

At-A-Glance

1. The Problem ([Mark 9:14–18](#))
2. The Rebukes (vv. 19–24)
3. The Solution (vv. 25–27)
4. The Lesson (vv. 28–29)

In Depth

1. The Problem ([Mark 9:14–18](#))

Upon returning from the mountain with three disciples, Jesus encounters the remaining nine arguing with some teachers of the Law. While the cause of the argument or why the teachers were involved is not explicitly stated, the father's response suggests it has something to do with the disciples' inability to heal his son. Disciples were supposed to be able to carry out duties (teaching, etc.) in their teacher's absence. The expectation could have been that Christ's disciples would perform miracles like Him; His disciples were commissioned to do so ([Mark 6:7](#)), and had done it before (6:12–13). However, they were rendered powerless in this instance and didn't know why. The unbelieving teachers would have seized such an opportunity to bring shame to Jesus and His followers.

2. The Rebukes (vv. 19–24)

This passage contains two rebukes. In the first, Jesus addresses the crowd, but especially expresses His disappointment with His disciples. They had been with Him, witnessing many miracles He performed. He commissioned them, and they successfully carried out those missions. However, they still struggled to believe. Lack of faith appears to be a recurring theme in the disciples' lives, as seen in the calming of the storm ([Matthew 8:23–27](#), [Mark 4:35–40](#)), Peter walking on water ([Matthew 14:25–33](#)), Christ's warning about the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees ([Matthew 16:5–12](#)), and even after His resurrection ([Mark 16:14](#)). Jesus rebuked them first, then took action to "fix" where they failed. The demon then threw the boy into another convulsion, perhaps either to intimidate Jesus or as one final act as it realized it would be cast out.

The second rebuke was directed toward the father who, after watching his son live this way for years with no cure, and his faith shaken by the disciples' inability to help, says, "Do something if you can." Christ reminds him that His ability is unquestioned. The issue is the man's faith. The man expresses the conflict of many believers: "I do believe, but help me not to doubt!"

3. The Solution (vv. 25–27)

Jesus' response to the man's request to heal both his son and his wavering faith, was to rebuke the evil spirit. He not

only commanded the spirit to come out of the boy, but to never enter him again—complete and permanent healing. Exorcists of the time would have attempted to use various methods to suppress the demon—spells, potions, or pain, for example. Jesus simply used His Word to completely expel it, further demonstrating His power.

Christ performed this miracle before the crowd grew, presumably to limit being a spectacle, because He knew the people would not believe, indicated by the murmur running through the crowd after the boy was healed. Without waiting, observing, or hoping for the best, they were saying, “He’s dead.” Such unbelief!

4. The Lesson (vv. 28–29)

Jewish teachers of that day would customarily further explain important subjects in private with their disciples. Once alone, the disciples asked why they were unable to cast out the demon. Christ responded, “This kind can be cast out only by prayer (and fasting).” The disciples had not prayed before attempting to cast out the demon, perhaps because of confidence (or arrogance) because they had done it before, forgetfulness, or the excitement of the moment. Christ’s previous rebuke seems to indicate that it was because they lacked faith, and as a result, they neglected to pray. In any regard, Christ pointed out that “this kind” of situation could only be solved by dependency on and faith in God exhibited by prayer and fasting.

Search the Scriptures

1. What did Christ say is the disciples’ problem ([Mark 9:19, 29](#))?



2. What does the father say that reveals the condition of his heart and faith? What is Christ’s response (vv. 22–23)?



Discuss the Meaning

This passage reveals the lack of faith of two types of people: the father had heard of Christ’s power and brought his son to be healed, and the disciples had seen His power in action, yet both struggled to believe. What are the implications for us, who do not have Christ’s physical presence, but hearing about and seeing His power? Is there any difference in how we are to approach the Father with difficulties in our lives?

Lesson in Our Society

We are more like the disciples than we want to admit. They physically walked with Jesus and saw Him perform miracles, but they worried, were ineffective, and lacked faith. We do the same. We have testimonies of God’s healing, provision, and power, yet when faced with trials, prayer is often a last resort.

Our culture of self-sufficiency has permeated our churches. We believe if we work hard enough, we can achieve anything and there is little room for dependency on others. Since we believe we have the power, we fail to seek God’s power. This lesson reminds us that God is all-powerful, and any ability we have comes from Him.

Make It Happen

The father’s honesty is refreshing. He does believe; he asked for help, so he believed healing was possible. However, he still doubted; after watching his son struggle for so long, and seeing the disciples’ inability to rescue his son, he questioned Christ’s ability. Christ put the ownership of the problem in its place—not His power (“Anything is possible...”), but their faith (“...if a person believes”). Faith matters. What circumstances are you facing that you have not prayed about? Are there people in your life that you have become convinced will never change, or never come to know Jesus? What confessions do you need to make about your view of God, His power, or your faith? Ask God to show you. Confess, repent, have faith, and pray.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do.

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned.

More Light on the Text

Mark 9:14–29

14 And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. 15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.

Jesus has just come down from the mountain where Peter, James, and John saw Him transfigured and heard God the Father's confirmation of His uniqueness as the Son. As He came down, He saw a great multitude and the scribes were questioning (Gk. *suzeteo*, **sood-zay-TEH-oh**) with them. The word means to debate and discuss vehemently in order to reach a solution or agreement. Jesus comes down to a commotion, and the discussion stops "straightway" or immediately (Gk. *euthus*, **ew-THOUS**). This word comes up in the Gospel of Mark numerous times and gives the whole Gospel a sense of urgency. All the people see Him, are greatly amazed, and salute (Gk. *aspazomai*, **ah-SPAHD-zo-my**) or greet Him as an honored rabbi.

16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them? 17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

Jesus asks the scribes why they questioned the disciples. These men were educated and well versed in the Mosaic Law, often asked to settle judicial and religious matters. A man from the crowd brought his son to the disciples and by association to Jesus. This man's son was oppressed by a "dumb" (Gk. *alalos*, **AH-lah-los**) spirit, meaning speechless. The spirit was considered mute because those possessed by demons were said to take on the possessor's characteristics. In this case, the demon that could not speak influenced the child to lack speech as well.

18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

Not only does the demon keep the child from speaking, he also controls the boy's body. Mark uses five words to describe the demon's influence over the young man. He takes him, which means possesses or seizes him. He tears him, meaning to distort or convulse. He foams at the mouth. He gnashes (Gk. *trizo*, **TREED-zo**) his teeth, a common feature of epileptic fits. "Gnashing" is usually used for shrill sounds such as the squawking of birds; in this context, it indicates the sound of grating teeth. From this, we can conclude this was a violent seizure that overtook the young man. Lastly, the father adds that he pines away (Gk. *xeraino*, **ksay-RYE-no**), which means the boy would dry up and become rigid. The father expresses his frustration that he brought the boy to the disciples and they couldn't cast the demon out. Mature disciples were expected to know enough of their master's teaching to stand in his stead. Many were called upon to deliver lectures in his absence. This, however, is not a lecture, but an exorcism, which is out of their league.

19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

Jesus responds with frustration. He addresses the whole generation, which in this context focuses on all the people living at the current time. Jesus calls them faithless, because they did not believe in Him and His power to cast out devils. Jesus continues in frustration asking a rhetorical question: "How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer with you?" In these questions, Jesus points out that He will not always be on earth. One day He will ascend to

heaven and not deal directly with these types of problems. His authority will be delegated to His apostles and church. In other words, if they do not have faith, they better obtain it soon.

20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

Heeding Jesus' request, they brought the boy to Him. The demon saw Him and responded. Immediately the demon caused him to tear (Gk. *susparasso*, **sue-spah-RAH-soh**), or convulse and shake. This verb is the intensified form of the same root word that appears as "rent" in v. 26. He fell to the ground and wallowed or rotated his body while foaming at the mouth. This self-destructive behavior is characteristic of demonic possession ([Mark 5:1-5](#)). Exorcisms are very common in sub saharan Africa as well as in Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in North America. In the African context, demonic possession is often the result of animistic worship. Often when a Christian evangelist or pastor casts the demon out people are converted and sometimes a new church is born.

21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. 22 And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

Jesus asks diagnostic questions. It is not quite clear what their purpose was except to reveal the father's desire and measure of faith. The father lets Jesus know that his son who had suffered this was "of a child." The phrase is one word in Greek: *paideothen* (**pie-dee-OH-thehn**), which means since the onset of childhood. The boy had been under this demonic influence for a long time.

The father further adds that this condition endangers the boy; it casts, or throws, him into the fire. The boy clearly is not in control of his body during these episodes. The spirit also throws him into water to destroy or kill him. The father pleads for his son's life when he asks Jesus to have compassion and help them.

23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. 24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

Jesus turns the tables on the man's request. He had asked Jesus, "If you can do anything"; now Jesus says, "If you can believe." It is not about Jesus' ability to heal, but the disciples' and now the father's ability to put their trust in God. This trust in God, who can do the impossible, is vital and necessary to seeing His wonders.

Immediately the father not only expresses his belief, but calls Jesus Lord. This is no ordinary faith but faith with a definite object: Jesus Christ. After expressing his faith in Jesus as the One who can do the impossible, the father follows up with a seemingly contradictory statement: "Help my unbelief." It may seem contradictory, unless we look at the One asked to help. The father knows he is completely powerless in this situation and even needs Jesus' help to believe. This is the experience of Jesus' followers even now.

25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. 26 And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.

The people began to form a crowd. Jesus notices and doesn't want to create a scene. So He rebuked (Gk. *epitimaō*, **eh-pee-tee-MAH-oh**) the spirit, which means to admonish or warn forcefully; in other words, He ordered the spirit. The spirit is described as foul (Gk. *akathartos*, **ah-KAH-thar-toce**), which is to be ceremonially and sometimes morally unclean, in this context referring to the defilement of those supernatural beings hostile to God and His people. These beings' purpose is solely to deface God's creation, and especially man as His representative. Jesus rebukes him by name. He is a "dumb and deaf," referring to the young man's hearing and speaking.

Jesus continues with His rebuke. He charges (Gk. *epitasso*, **eh-pee-TAH-so**), or commands, the demon. Jesus takes authority over the demon as He commands him to come out of the man's son. Here we see that demonic possession

is internal; the demon inside the young man's body now must leave, and Jesus commands him to "enter no more into him." This young man's body would no longer be the evil spirit's home.

As soon as Jesus rebuked him, the spirit cried and rent (Gk. *sparasso*, **spa-RAH-so**) the boy sore. The word "rent" means to shake uncontrollably. It seems the demon left but not before putting up a fight. After the demon left, the boy lay there as if dead or comatose.

27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. 28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? 29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

The young man was not left there. Jesus took him by the hand and lifted (*egeiro*, **eh-GAY-ro**) him up. This word, meaning to wake up or rise, is often used in the context of Jesus' resurrection and the resurrection of believers and unbelievers ([Matthew 16:21](#), [Matthew 27:52](#), [John 5:21](#)). Some scholars say that this suggests the idea of Jesus' resurrection—the boy lay there as dead and was lifted up. This is further confirmed by the use of the verb arose (*anistemi*, **ah-NEE-stay-me**), which also is often used in the context of Jesus' resurrection ([Matthew 17:9](#), [Mark 8:31](#), [Luke 18:33](#), [John 20:9](#)). This is different than Lazarus' actual rising from the dead in [John 12](#). Here the language hints at Jesus' resurrection, but the boy did not die, only lay as if dead or comatose (v. 26), so Mark is using the same kind of language to talk about the boy being physically restored after being possessed.

After He came in, the disciples wonder at His spiritual power and ask why they could not cast out the demon. The narrative says privately; from the context, we can assume the disciples were embarrassed by their lack of spiritual power. Jesus' answer is that they were deficient in prayer. He says "this kind" in reference to the demon. The word kind (*genos*, **geh-NOS**) means offspring, kindred, or individuals of the same nature; in this context, it refers to the evil spirits of the type who possessed the young man. Jesus is not referring to prayer here in the sense of on-the-spot praying, but a life saturated with prayer. Only one who has a rich and dynamic relationship with God can take authority over evil spirits the way Jesus did. The words "and fasting" are a later addition (which is why they appear in the KJV but not the NLT) but not to be discounted. In most later manuscripts, the words "and fasting" are included, but a couple of significant fourth-century manuscripts and several medieval manuscripts do not include these words. Still, by looking at the testimony of the Old Testament, New Testament, and the early church, we can conclude that prayer was often accompanied by fasting, and served to focus those fasting on the task of prayer. It is probably this frequent connection of prayer and fasting that was the impetus for the addition of fasting to this passage.

Say It Correctly

Pineth. **PIE-nith**.

Tare. **TER**.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Faithful God

([Genesis 15:1–6](#))

TUESDAY

Saving God

([Genesis 50:15–21](#))

WEDNESDAY

Powerful God
([Isaiah 43:5–13](#))



THURSDAY

Healing God
([Matthew 9:27–33](#))



FRIDAY

Forgiving God
([John 5:19–24](#))



SATURDAY

Fulfilling God
([John 6:35–40](#))



SUNDAY

Powerful Faith
([Mark 9:14–29](#))

