

Small Group Questions

1 Kings 18:17-24

Mark 9:14-29

Sermon Title: MindShaping: Learning to “Think Like Jesus”

Sermon Series: Getting Ready for the “Believe” Series #1

Week of 13 August 2017

Theme/Concept

This is the first of three “Pre-series” sermons to prepare for the Believe series. Each sermon will cover one of the three 10-week themes. The first theme I’m calling MindShaping: Learning to “Think Like Jesus.” We focus on what we believe, our core convictions as followers of Jesus. Two theological errors weaken our faith: wrong belief (like the Israelites confronted by Elijah on Mt. Carmel) and unbelief (immature, little-faith in gospels), like the man who brought his son for healing to Jesus.

Application: Instead of limping in compromise, or wavering in unbelief, we learn to stand strong when we know what we believe and believe what we know.

Charge: Know what you believe and believe what you know.

Opening Question

After making each individual feel welcome to the small group, a question or series of questions like the following can give everyone an opportunity to participate, start thinking about a concept from the passage and gradually share more openly the deep work that God is doing in our lives.

01. What belief or understanding about God, Jesus, or the Bible did you once have that has since been corrected? How did that correction come about?
02. When have you found your belief in Christ’s power to be the strongest? When have you found it to be the weakest?

Scripture References(NIV):

1 Kings 18:17-24

Background/Context:

Ahab was king of Israel, the northern tribes, and married to evil Queen Jezebel. Ahab worshipped foreign gods and did more evil in the sight of God than all the previous kings. It was the third year of the drought that Elijah had pronounced against Ahab as God’s way to bring Israel back to Himself. Ahab and his servant are roaming the land for grazing fields for his horses and mules when Ahab’s servant comes upon Elijah. He asks the servant to take him to Ahab. God had told Elijah to appear before Ahab because He was going to end the drought. Ahab had been desperately looking for Elijah without success, so he is quite surprised when his servant returns with Elijah.

¹⁷ When he saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?”

¹⁸ “I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the LORD’s commands and have followed the Baals. ¹⁹ Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”

²⁰ So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. ²¹ Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”

But the people said nothing.

²² Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the LORD’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. ²³ Get two bulls for us. Let Baal’s prophets choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. ²⁴ Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire—he is God.”

Then all the people said, “What you say is good.”

Mark 9:14-29

Background/Context:

Earlier in this chapter, Mark describes the Transfiguration where Peter, James, and John are with Jesus on a high mountain. Jesus’ clothes become radiantly white and they witness the appearance of Elijah and Moses and God’s pronouncement from a cloud that, “This is My one dear Son.” Afterwards, Jesus and the three go down the mountain to join the rest of the disciples.

¹⁴ When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵ As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

¹⁶ “What are you arguing with them about?” he asked.

¹⁷ A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸ Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

¹⁹ “You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

²⁰ So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

²¹ Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?”

“From childhood,” he answered. ²² “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

²³ “‘If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”

²⁴ Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

²⁶ The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

²⁸ After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

²⁹ He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”

Understanding the Scripture

A question like one of the following may help your group understand the content of the passage. Answering all of these

questions exactly as written isn't necessary or recommended. Allow time for the application and Mission Statement questions.

- U1. 1 Kings 18:17-18: Why did Ahab call Elijah the “troubler of Israel?”
- U2. 1 Kings 18:19-20: Why did Elijah ask for so many people and prophets to come to Mt. Carmel?
- U3. 1 Kings 18:21: What were the two opinions between which the people were wavering?
- U4. 1 Kings 18:22-24: Is this a fair test that God would agree to honor?

- U5. Mark 9:14-15: Why were all the people overwhelmed with wonder when they saw Jesus?
- U6. Mark 9:16-18: What would be some points brought out by the crowd and the teachers of the law as they argued regarding the inability of the disciples to heal the boy?
- U7. Mark 9:19: What emotions or feelings is Jesus expressing when He asks (rhetorically) “how long?”
- U8. Mark 9:20-22: Why would Jesus ask how long the man’s son had been tormented by the spirit in him?
- U9. Mark 9:23: What is Jesus saying about the boy’s father here?
- U10. Mark 9:24: What does the father profess and confess in his response? What does his confession say about the father’s belief in Jesus?
- U11. Mark 9:25-27: Jesus calls the spirit “deaf and mute.” Yet, He gives the spirit an audible command and the spirit responds with a verbal shriek. In what sense, then, is the spirit “deaf and mute?”
- U12. Mark 9:28-29: Why does Jesus answer the disciples’ question by saying this healing could come about only by prayer?

Applying the Scripture

Small groups are a primary way of *building a community fully alive in Christ*. A small group facilitator can use questions like the following, adapted to the context of the particular small group, to help the group move beyond understanding the passage to allowing *Jesus Christ to fully change our lives* by the passage.

- A1. Who have you perceived to be a “troubler” in your life when, in fact, God may have brought that person into your life to correct wrong beliefs?
- A2. In what ways might you be putting God to the test?
- A3. What would Jesus tell you about your belief right now?
- A4. How does your prayer life reflect your level of belief?

Missional Strategy: Invite, Connect, Grow, and Serve

Use questions like the following, adapted to the context of your particular small group, to work toward the milestone for the year. **Milestone:** By this time next year each of us will have taken at least one step to become more like Jesus in our upward connection (connect), inner strength (grow) and outward focus (serve).

- M1. How well do you know what you believe? How would you summarize your beliefs, if asked?
- M2. How would you correct a friend who clearly, according to Scripture, has wrong beliefs?
- M3. What and/or whom do you need to pray for?
- M4. What evidence is there in your thoughts, words, and actions that you believe in your heart what you know in your mind?

Closing Prayer

If your small group prays together, some of the following concepts might be helpful to invite the Holy Spirit to help each member of the group grow in areas that may have come up during the group's discussion.

Pray:

- That the group would grow in community and love so that the group or an appropriate group member might graciously and humbly counsel a member with a wrong belief.
- That the Holy Spirit would open the heart of any group member with a wrong belief and test those beliefs by allowing the member to experience God's truth and power within the group.
- That God would establish or strengthen a non-threatening time of prayer during the small group's meeting to pray for one another.
- That group members would give bold testimony of how God's power is working in their lives.