
PARANORMAL

Demons

RECALL

Icebreaker:

What is your experience with the following?

- Séances
- Tarot cards
- Ouija boards
- Horoscopes
- Palm Reading

Discuss Your Experience:

From Sunday's message we learned about a demon possessed man in Mark 5 and how Jesus restored his life. In this story we see that demon possession was a powerful tool used by Satan to inhibit people from a relationship with God.

- Discuss some facts learned from the pastor's message regarding whether or not demons are capable of possessing Christians or not.
- In what ways do demons manifest themselves in people today?
- Should Christians attempt to expel demons from people?

Introduction:

Although modern culture often rejects the existence of anything supernatural, the Bible does not. If we take the Bible seriously, we cannot ignore the persistent references in the New Testament to real demons and how they tormented humans on earth. Demon possession is a phenomenon that occurred on an amazing scale during the time of Jesus; today demon possession and its oppression may be subtle, yet, still just as destructive. Satan and his demons have one objective and that is to deter mankind from the love and redeeming grace of Jesus Christ. Using God's Word we can learn to protect ourselves from the wicked control of demons.

REVEAL

Pray For Guidance:

Take a few moments and ask God to help you discern, understand and apply the spiritual truth(s) of this week's lesson.

Mark 9:14-29 (HCSB)

The Power of Faith over a Demon

14 When they came to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and scribes disputing with them. 15 All of a sudden, when the whole crowd saw Him, they were amazed and ran to greet Him. 16 Then He asked them, "What are you arguing with them about?" 17 Out of the crowd, one man answered Him, "Teacher, I brought my son to You. He has a spirit that makes him unable to speak. 18 Wherever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I asked Your disciples to drive it out, but they couldn't."

19 He replied to them, "You unbelieving generation! How long will I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him to Me." 20 So they brought him to Him. When the spirit saw Him, it immediately convulsed the boy. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. 21 "How long has this been happening to him?" Jesus asked his father. "From childhood," he said. 22 "And many times it has thrown him into fire or water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." 23 Then Jesus said to him, "If You can?" Everything is possible to the one who believes." 24 Immediately the father of the boy cried out, "I do believe! Help my unbelief." 25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly coming together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you: come out of him and never enter him again!" 26 Then it came out, shrieking and convulsing him violently. The boy became like a corpse, so that many said, "He's dead." 27 But Jesus, taking him by the hand, raised him, and he stood up. 28 After He went into a house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" 29 And He told them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer [and fasting]."

REFLECT

Understand the Context:

- The Author of the Gospel of Mark is a man named John Mark. Who was John Mark's main source of information in writing this Gospel?
- What sharp disagreement did the Apostle Paul and Barnabas have concerning John Mark that led to their split in ministry? Acts 15:36-39
- What was the Apostle Paul's redeeming remark about John Mark many years later? 2 Timothy 4:11
- Use the reference guide in your HCSB study Bible to find two additional parallel Gospel passages of the Mark 9:14-21 account.

RECOGNIZE

Know the Truth(s):

Keeping in mind the context of the selected passage, read the Scripture as a group and carefully take note of the truth(s) and/or promises God provides. What did it mean? What does it mean? Are any meanings unclear?

Essentially demons are referenced in scripture in the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John) and the book of Acts. With the exception of King Saul, there is no mention of a demon possessed person found in the old Testament. There is an explosion of demon possession during the time of Christ and the apostles, but later in the epistles, again there is no reference to demon possession.

- Discuss possible reasons why demons were exposed more during Jesus' ministry than at any other time.
- In the Mark 9:14 story, why do you think the demon became active when the boy approached Jesus?

When Jesus arrives on the scene in Mark 9:12, He notices His disciples are surrounded by a large crowd and some scribes that are arguing with them; this is a common theme of hostile unbelief on the part of the scribes.

- Read your HCSB commentary regarding verse 14, what other scriptures in Mark reveals the scribe's hostility toward Jesus and His disciples?

In this passage, the boy's father was clearly "conflicted" while the father had his doubts about Jesus and the disciples; he had a pressing problem and wanted to, needed to believe they could and would solve it. Perhaps it's understandable that the father reveals an element of the doubt he is experiencing to Jesus in his request-, "if you are able". Jesus immediately makes the issue clear, namely, that faith in Him must be genuine to be effective:

- Share an experience in your life where you have struggled with unbelief.
- Share an experience where you have witnessed an act of great faith.

In Matt.8:8 there is a story of a man, a centurion, which had a servant who was very ill. Leaving the servant at the house the centurion went to meet Jesus and said to Him, if you "say the word" I believe my servant will be healed. The scripture says Jesus was "amazed" at the centurion's faith. On many other occasions, Jesus told the recipient of His miracles "your faith has saved you". The father of the possessed child was clearly not in the same category as those who had a clear and unreserved faith.

- What do you think of the father's statement: "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"?
- Do you think Jesus healed the boy on the basis of the father's faith?
- Who do you think Jesus was referring to when He said "You unbelieving generation! How long will I be with you?"

RESPOND

Take Action:

You've now prayed asking God to **Reveal** Himself and to help you understand the selected passage; you've **Reflected** on the context in which the passage was written; you've **Recognized** God's timeless truths. Now you have a choice: do nothing with what you've learned or **Respond**. To help determine your response, as a group, discuss the following questions:

In Mark 9:25 Jesus demonstrates His supreme authority over the demon by rebuking the unclean spirit, saying to it, "you mute and deaf spirit, I command you: come out of him and never enter him again!"

Luke 11:24-26 states "When an unclean spirit comes out of a man, it roams through waterless places looking for rest, and not finding rest, it then says, 'I'll go back to my house where I came from.' 25 And returning it finds the house swept and put in order. 26 Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and settle down there. As a result, that man's last condition is worse than the first."

- Why do you think Jesus said "never enter him again"?
- In the HCSB read the commentary in the HCSB on Mark 9:25. What makes this exorcism unique?

In the world, we see the effects of evil: not only human depravity which produces its own evil, but the compounded result of a complex system of wickedness controlled by an army of supernatural demons. In John 12:31, we also recognize that Jesus labeled Satan as the "ruler of the world".

- Since Satan temporarily rules over this world system, where do you suppose the greatest concentration of demonic activity is at work? Think of the political, economic, ideological, and media centers.
- In what ways have we as the church become increasingly tolerant of the world's system?

Jesus replied to the disciples question “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” in Mark 9:29 by saying “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and [fasting].” When Jesus says “this kind” he is referring to a more powerful demon than usual, insinuating there are different rankings within the demon world.

Ephesians 6:12 says “For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the **rulers**, against the **authorities**, against the **world powers of this darkness**, against the **spiritual forces of evil in the heavens**. 13 This is why you must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand.”

- Many Christians go through life without recognizing there is a spiritual battle going on all around them. How does the knowledge that there is a highly organized force working to defeat us, the church and our families change the way we prepare our spiritual fitness?
- In what ways can we relate to the disciples discussion with Jesus regarding their inability cast out the demon? How should we respond to what Jesus says?
- Read Ephesians 6:14-18 and discuss the practical uses of each item in the armor of God that will help us stand firm against demonic warfare.
- What spiritual attribute does fasting give to the believer in defeating demons?

Our victory over Satan’s attacks is not always evident in terms of his defeat and our success, but is sometimes won in what looks like our defeat and Satan’s success. When Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, it looked very much like Satan had won. But in our Lord’s apparent defeat (and Satan’s apparent victory) the Savior brought about our salvation and Satan’s defeat. The Book of Revelation informs us that there will be a time when Satan and his demons appear to triumph over the saints, but this should be viewed as a momentary defeat which accomplishes the purposes of God and which serves as a prelude to Jesus’ ultimate, eternal victory and Satan’s final destruction.

- Have you experienced what seemed to be defeat, but was really a victory? Share your experience.