



May 24, 2020

## Discussion Guide

### Face the Issue:

This week, Matt taught us concerning the concept of Jesus being our Living Hope. He also linked hope with faith. Hope is essential to living the Christian life but it is also one of the most fragile things that we have. The circumstances that we go through will often target our Hope first. It is then our faith that strengthens and secures our hope.

### Into the Word

#### Read Mark 9:14–29.

This story has several people that needed their hope and faith restored. The father summarizes it best when he says “I do believe; help my unbelief!”

Has there ever been a better description of loss of hope. We want to believe but for some reason we are struggling to do so. We have lost hope. Unbelief is not always about what we do not believe. Sometimes it’s about what is undoing our faith. Unbelief can be the result of real faith that has lost its potency or it’s power. Kind of like gunpowder getting wet or fertile soil being salted.

In the above story, the failure of the disciples to cast out the demon was really a failure to follow Jesus. They couldn’t do what Jesus had told them to do. Why not? When we fail in following Jesus it is always because we failed to deny ourselves and live in Him. Perhaps the disciples were out to prove themselves in front of the teachers of law instead of acting out of true compassion for the tormented child and his father. Instead of saying “We are nothing without Jesus and it is by Him that we cast you out.” They set out to prove their power to the critics.

Whatever the reason, they were powerless and hopeless because their faith in Christ was weakened by their need to prove something, to be important, and to be vindicated. They still believed in Jesus but this moment was not about Jesus anymore. It became about proving what they could do for Jesus instead of what they could do in Jesus. That is unbelief.

*Look again at this passage, especially verse 19. How do you imagine Jesus said these words? What do you think of Jesus’ words and attitude?*

*What do Jesus’ actions in this story reveal about how he felt about the generation at the time?*

*Do you think Jesus has the same strong feelings for our generation? Why or why not?*

*How do you see our failure to truly follow Jesus—to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow him—polluting our faith today?*

*What would happen in our church if all of us denied ourselves, took up our crosses, and followed Jesus wholeheartedly? What kind of impact might we have?*

## **Apply The Word**

When the disciples asked Jesus why they had failed, He answered them that “this kind can only come out with prayer”. In Matthews account of this incident, Jesus also told them that they failed because they had little faith. Put the two together and the prognosis was lack of faith and the cure is prayer.

The lack of prayer leaves faith weak and exposes you to losing your hope. The point of prayer is to bring us near to Jesus, to see Him large and powerful and as the source of our strength and power.

Prayer isn't about overcoming the evil, it's about overcoming our lack of faith and to strengthen our hope. We don't pray against the enemy, we pray for our own refreshed faith and authority in Christ.

*Why do we often fail to pray as our first option in dealing with struggles?*

*When has a lack of prayer polluted your faith?*