

¹⁴ When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. ¹⁵ “Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. “He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. ¹⁶ I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.” ¹⁷ “You unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” ¹⁸ Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment. ¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” ²⁰ He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” Matthew 17: 14-21

The poor disciples. They’ve been commissioned; they’ve been doing a lot of what Jesus has been doing. I wonder how they felt when they realized they were able to do some of Jesus’ miracles, or cast out their first demon. It must have felt very good. They probably thought that they were “invincible”

Then came this boy who was horribly demon possessed. His father is desperate. I can imagine the disciples were confident that they could cast out the demon and amaze everyone.

But something goes horribly wrong. No matter what they do, they can’t cast out that horrible demon. Finally when Jesus shows up on the scene after being on the mount where he was transfigured, it looks as if the disciples are really incompetent. When Jesus intervenes very quickly the young boy is healed.

In this version, the disciples (probably “red-faced”) come to Jesus and ask why. Jesus tells them they have a lack of faith. In other versions Jesus adds to this by saying that this was a very difficult demon possession.

While we probably wouldn’t be asked to cast out a demon, we can find ourselves in situations where we think we’ve come a long way in growing in our faith, and that we can “take on the world”. Then a situation comes either in our personal lives, in the lives of our friends, family, or in church that takes us by surprise. Whatever the particular situation is we find that no matter what we our efforts seem weak or useless. It is very easy with those kinds of challenges to quit, get discouraged, and “beat up” on ourselves.

I remember when I was still fairly new to ministry when two leaders of the church I was pastor of were at “logger heads” with each other. Their “back and forth” go so bad that I felt I needed to me with them with a couple of the other leaders of the church present. I really thought I could “handle it”. I prayed, prepared myself, and thought I did all the right things to prepare for such a meeting. But when the meeting to place I found that I had handled it poorly, and one or two things took place that really caught me off guard.

The situation didn’t end well. In the end God used it as a learning experience in my life, but I really felt deflated by the whole experience.

What I learned was that I should never think that I can handle any situation, but in humility turn to God and try to be totally dependent on Him, Secondly is the gift of forgiveness from God. The Bible tells us that if “we confess our sins he just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1John1: 9).

The bottom line is that we always need to be mindful that we, created by God, are fallible, and will never be perfect. Secondly we need to place such situations before God for God’s glory, and while we might think God meant it in our lives for harm, inevitably God means it for good.

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