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Supernatural Power

Stories from Mark’s Gospel

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Week 9 | Mark 9

### Chapter 9 Summary:

Having brought things to a head in Mark 8, Jesus will continue to reveal himself and his mission and challenge the disciples to believe. At this point in Mark’s Gospel, Jesus is setting his course for Jerusalem where he will suffer and die.

# Day 1

## Read

### Mark 9:2–13 (NIV)

2After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. 3His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. 4And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

5Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” 6(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

7Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

8Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

9As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant.

11And they asked him, “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”

12Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? 13But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.”

## Study

* Many scholars see a parallel between Jesus’ transfiguration and Moses’ time on Mount Sinai when he received the law. Read [Exodus 24:1–2, 24:9-18; 34:29-30](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+24%3A1%E2%80%932%2C+24%3A9-18%3B+34%3A29-30&version=NIV). What comparisons can you find?
* So far in his Gospel, Mark has rarely made concrete references to chronological time, yet Mark 9:2 says “six days after.” Six days after what? Glance back at [Mark 8:27–9:1](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Mk8.27) for the answer.
* Read the Faithlife Study Bible notes on [Mark 9:11–12](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Mk9.12) for help understanding Jesus’ reference to Elijah.

## Think about

As we’ve seen in Mark, Jesus has been slowly unveiling who he is, why he’s come, and what he will accomplish. He’s trying to prepare his disciples for the inevitability of the cross. Yet he’s also giving them hope that the cross won’t be the final word. All this is true for the disciples, and and encouragement to Mark’s readers facing persecution.

Garland believes that the Transfiguration “serves to confirm that the suffering Jesus will endure is not incompatible with his glory. The scene functions like a hologram. For a brief moment, the disciples glimpse the truth as divine glory shines through the veil of suffering. It foreshadows the time when God will gloriously enthrone Jesus after the degradation on the cross. This white flash of the splendor to come brightens the dark cloud of tribulation that presently hangs over Mark’s first readers and confirms Jesus’ promise that those who follow and suffer for him will not have done so in vain.”[[1]](#footnote-2)

## Pray

As we journey through life, we need to see Jesus as a man who empathizes with our frailty and weakness, though he never sinned. We can turn to Jesus in our fear, doubt, and frailty and he will welcome us with open arms.

We also need to see Jesus in his glory — eternal, transcendent, powerful, in control. We can trust Jesus to make good on all his promises to permanently defeat evil and death and bring us home.

Praise God today that Jesus is exactly who you need.

# Day 2

## Read

### Mark 9:14–29 (NIV)

14When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. 15As 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.

17A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. 18Whenever 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.”

20So 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.

21Jesus 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.”

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

25When 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.”

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

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

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

## Study

* Jesus reacts harshly to the disciples’ failure to cast out this demon. Scholar Morna Hooker notes that his reaction is reminiscent of many Old Testament passages—the closest is [Deuteronomy 32:20](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Dt32.20). “The sweeping condemnation of Jesus’ whole generation seems more appropriate to a general indictment of the nation’s failure to respond to him, rather than to a rebuke of the disciples for their lack of faith in his power. But perhaps it is the crowd, as much as the disciples, who are to blame; when Jesus himself was unable to perform cures in 6:1–6, it was the inhabitants of Nazareth who had insufficient faith.”[[2]](#footnote-3) Do you agree with this assessment?
* The Faithlife Study Bible note helps us understand what Jesus might have meant in [9:29](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Mk9.29). Check it out.

## Think about

In Mark 6:7, Jesus sends out the disciples with the authority to cast out impure spirits. In 6:30, they return excited about all they had “done and taught.” Now in chapter 9 we see the disciples struggling with this demon in front of the crowd. Has something changed?. N.T. Wright sees in this succession of stories Mark as reassuring to his readers. Although following Jesus can be difficult, there is hope.

Wright says, “At Caesarea Philippi [Jesus] had told his followers that it was time to take up the cross ([Mark 8:35](file:///Mark%208/35)). His vocation, and the disciples’ awareness of it, has been confirmed by the heavenly voice. The road now leads to Jerusalem. Up until now it has been comparatively easy to follow Jesus; from here on it’s going to be harder and harder…People today often suppose that the early years of a person’s Christian pilgrimage are the difficult ones, and that as you go on in the Christian life it gets more straightforward. The opposite is frequently the case. Precisely when you learn to walk beside Jesus, you are given harder tasks, which will demand more courage, more spiritual energy. Did we suppose following Jesus was like a summer holiday?”[[3]](#footnote-4)

To follow Jesus, we need wisdom, endurance, and enough faith to believe that God will come through. How do we get that kind of faith? We ask, just like the Father in this story did. We acknowledge both our existing, but fragile faith, and ask Jesus to give us more. When the road gets tough, we’re honest enough to pray, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief.”

## Pray

Is there a situation in your life that is hard? A miracle you’re asking for? Ask again. Don’t give up. Trust that God is for you and will do what is best, and when you need more faith, ask for that too. Our Father is more gracious and merciful than we could ever imagine!

# Day 3

## Read

### Mark 9:30–35 (NIV)

30They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, 31because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” 32But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

33They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” 34But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

35Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

## Study

* Read [Isaiah 53](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Is53). How is Jesus’ prediction echoing the prophecy from Isaiah?
* Mark highlights a stark contrast between Jesus’ prediction of what awaits him in Jerusalem and the disciples’ self-centered arguing. How is Jesus’ modeling the wisdom he gives in verse 35?
* Think back to what Jesus says to Peter and the disciples in [8:33](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Mk8.33), “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” How are the disciples proving this is true?

## Think about

In his commentary, Garland poignantly describes the scene Mark is presenting, ”The picture Mark presents has tragic-comic dimensions. Jesus walks ahead in silence on his way to his sacrificial death while his straggling disciples push and shove, trying to establish the order of the procession behind him.”[[4]](#footnote-5)

Unfortunately, today we too often recreate this procession. Too many of us jockey for first position, pout when we aren’t praised, and fall into a well of self-doubt if we our efforts aren’t acknowledged. It’s an all too human response, but one from which our Savior came to free us.

Part of having faith in Christ is believing that he sees us, loves us, and values us for who we are and who he is shaping us to be. What’s more, his assessment is the one that matters most. We don’t have to prove ourselves to God. Our desire for power and position is silly in light of the glorious eternity God has planned for us. We can take a deep breath, stop scrapping and fighting for what we think we deserve, and set our minds on the concerns of God. He will take care of the rest.

## Pray

Ask the Spirit to direct your mind to the things of God, and pray that you will find contentment in simple acts of faithfulness where you serve others and are happy to be last.

# Day 4

*If you haven’t already, give the Pastors Pregame podcast a try. New episodes every Thursday at* [*CFhome.org/pregame*](https://subsplash.com/christfellowship-tx/lb/ms/+hg732gk) *or through* [*Apple Podcasts*](https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/pastors-pregame/id1582563644)*.*

## Read

### Mark 9:35–41 (NIV)

35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

36He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 37“Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

38“Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”

39“Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, 40for whoever is not against us is for us. 41Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

## Study

* In verse 35, Jesus tells them that the first must be the very last, and then he welcomes a child. Garland helps us understand how children were viewed in the ancient world, and why this comparison is so striking, “Jesus does not set up the child as a model to be imitated, for his culture had no romanticized notions about children…The point of comparison is the insignificance of the child on the honor scale. The child had no power, no status, and few rights. A child was dependent, vulnerable, entirely subject to the authority of the father; yet Jesus chooses such a one to represent those who are needy and lowly. If one wants to be great, one should shower attention on those who are regarded as insignificant, as Jesus himself has done.”[[5]](#footnote-6)
* Garland goes to the point out the irony of the disciples’ stopping others from performing exorcisms, “The disciples only recently bungled an exorcism, yet they do not hesitate to obstruct someone who is successful but who is not a member of their team. Jesus catches them by surprise when he does not commend them for their vigilance but instead reproves them (9:39)”.[[6]](#footnote-7)

## Think about

Jesus responds to John’s statement in verse 38 with lessons about relating to other groups of Christ-followers.

First, don’t hinder others when they are doing good in Jesus’ name. It’s easy for even Christians to fall into a kind of tribalism, disregarding anyone outside of their group. There is a perverse power in labeling others as “outsiders” or “other.”

Second, know that God rewards those who demonstrate service and hospitality *to the disciples*. The implication is that the disciples must humbly acknowledge that they will need the help and hospitality of others. There is interdependency in the kingdom of God.

Do you notice Christian groups, whether churches, denominations, organizations who love to be the ones determining who’s “in” and who’s “out”? How can we guard against this tendency? What should be the criteria we use when discerning true false teaching?

## Pray

Pray for the kind of supernatural peace that will allow you to be a humble servant. Pray for wisdom and discernment, that you can see people clearly, but also the humility to celebrate the work others do for Jesus, even if you disagree on minor issues.

# Day 5

## Read

### Mark 9:42–50 (NIV)

41Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

42“If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. 43If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. [44] 45And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. [46] 47And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, 48where

“ ‘the worms that eat them do not die,

and the fire is not quenched.’

49Everyone will be salted with fire.

50“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.”

## Study

* Gombis helps us see Jesus’ point in verse 42 and connects it to [9:38–41](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Mk9.38-41), “Jesus defines ‘these little ones’ as ‘those who believe in me,’ referring to those whom the disciples are responsible to care for through service and hospitality (v. 42). As Mark’s Gospel is heard in church communities, it is a reference to any member of the body—all Christians, especially those who are vulnerable and on the margins of the community. The ‘stumbling’ in view here refers to losing faith. When powerful people build their followings and criticize other groups in order to shore up group loyalty, young Christians or those turned off by controversy and division may lose heart or grow disillusioned. They may turn away from the faith, losing interest in following Jesus.”[[7]](#footnote-8)
* The Faithlife Bible study notes on [Mark 9:43–9:50](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Mk9.43) help with Jesus’ words about hell and how he uses the metaphor of salt.

## Think about

David Garland gives us something to think about:

“Jesus promises a reward to outsiders who show Christians a bare minimum of goodwill (9:41), but he threatens Christians with dire judgment if they cause a little one who believes in him to slip. He uses hyperbole to make the point: They would be better off to drown at the bottom of the sea with a millstone hung around their necks. Better off than what? Jesus omits the conclusion, but one can easily fill in the blanks. It is better to drown in the sea with no chance of escape than to face the judgment that God will dish out to those who lead others to sin. One can infer that God shows more concern for the little ones’ fragile faith than for the great ones’ fragile egos, which cause them to lord it over or ignore others…. A string of maxims warns disciples that they need to be more worried about the evil within them than about outsiders.” [[8]](#footnote-9)

It’s easier to focus on outside dangers than do the hard work of rooting out our own sin and creating loving, supportive communities that show care to everyone. Yet Jesus’ analogy in verse 50 should give us pause. “If salt fails to salt food, it is not salt and is worthless. The same applies to disciples. If they do not manifest the distinctive characteristics Jesus requires, they are not real disciples and are worthless to him.”[[9]](#footnote-10)

## Pray

As you enter into a time of prayer, go back and review all of Mark 9. What is the Spirit saying to you through the Word? Pay attention, is the Spirit convicting you? Confess and ask him to guide you into a better way.

We are coming to the end of part 1 of our Mark series. We’ll take a break and celebrate Easter and then come back to study Mark 10–16. Since we’re at the halfway point, take some time to reflect on Mark 1–9. What have you been learning about Jesus and what it means to follow him? How should studying Mark affect the way you think or behave? Pray over your answers.

1. David E. Garland, [*Mark*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nivac62mk?ref=Bible.Mk9.2-8&off=2825&ctx=is+disciples+(9:9).%0a~The+Transfiguration%2c), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 343–344. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Morna D. Hooker, [*The Gospel according to Saint Mark*](https://ref.ly/logosres/black62mk?ref=Bible.Mk9.17-19&off=752&ctx=%3f+Bring+him+to+me.%E2%80%99+~Jesus%E2%80%99+reaction+to+t), Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1991), 223–224. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Tom Wright, [*Mark for Everyone*](https://ref.ly/logosres/evry62mk?ref=Bible.Mk9.14-29&off=2804&ctx=he+transfiguration.+~At+Caesarea+Philippi) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 118–119. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Garland, 367. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Garland, 367. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Garland, 368. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Gombis, 333. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Garland, 369. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Garland, 370. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)