

Lessons for DIFFICULT TIMES

BY MAURICE GRAHAM

During a chaotic evening at a group home where I worked as a Direct Care Counselor for at-risk teens, one of the boys snapped! After a fight, thoughts of his extremely challenging life and memories of the family that abandoned him, anger and hopelessness consumed him. “I’m going to end it all!” he screamed as he bolted through the back door and into the woods. I took off behind him in what was possibly the most important foot race of my life, and probably his. The mad dash took us clear through the woods and onto a dirt road on the other side of the facility. It ended in a wrestling match where he clawed his way toward traffic on the street beyond the dirt road. After things calmed, the young man and I sat quietly on the dirt road until he broke the silence. “How come nobody wants me man?”

Have you ever felt alone, hopeless, discouraged or depressed? Are you facing a difficult situation? Mark 9:14-29 is filled with lessons for making it through difficult times.

Read Mark 9:14-29.

Who are the characters in the story? Mark 9:14

What are some of the thoughts or feelings that could have prevented the father from reaching out for help? _____

In Mark 9:18, the disciples genuinely tried to help the father and son but could

not. There will be moments when the people we look to for wisdom, help, or support, may not have all the answers we need. Fortunately, the father did not mistake the disciple's inability to help, to mean that Jesus could not help.

LESSON: When attempts to fix a problem fail, or reaching out doesn't seem to be helpful, trust God's wisdom and love for you and keep reaching out.

Where did the father turn when the disciples couldn't help him? Mark 9:17-18

“Now the **afflicted father made his way through the crowd, and falling at the feet of Jesus, poured out the story of his trouble and disappointment.** The disciples, unable to account for their defeat, felt that they were bringing dishonor upon themselves and their Master. And in the crowd, there were scribes who made the most of this opportunity to humiliate them. Pressing around the disciples, they plied them with questions, seeking to prove that they and their Master were deceivers. Here, the rabbis triumphantly declared, was an evil spirit that neither the disciples nor Christ Himself could conquer. **The people were inclined to side with the scribes, and a feeling of contempt and scorn pervaded the crowd.**” Desire of Ages, p. 427

Why did the situation appear to get worst when it was brought to Jesus? Mark 9:20, 26 _____

“Again the **Prince of life and the prince of the powers of darkness had met on the field of battle,**—Christ in

fulfillment of His mission to “preach deliverance to the captives, ... to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18), **Satan seeking to hold his victim under his control.** Angels of light and the hosts of evil angels, unseen, were pressing near to behold the conflict. **For a moment, Jesus permitted the evil spirit to display his power, that the beholders might comprehend the deliverance about to be wrought.**” Desire of Ages, p. 428

Did you miss any hidden characters in the first question? _____

Who are they? _____

How should this knowledge change the way we deal with them? 2 Corinthians 10:3-4; Ephesians 6:10-19

LESSON: Our struggles are a part of the “Great Controversy” between good and evil. Remember that praying is important.

How long had the father and son been facing this problem? Mark 9:21

Jesus allowed the ultimate hopelessness of the situation to be revealed as well as the duration so that you would know that your worst problems aren't too big for him.

LESSON: Jesus can handle your little and big problems. Take them to Him!

In Mark 9:23-24 Jesus said to the father, “*If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.*”

What was the father's response?

LESSON: Be honest with Jesus and

go to Him just as you are.

No matter who you are, what you are going through, or how you are feeling, Jesus loves and cares for you.

The young man in the opening story eventually discovered what Psalms 27:10 says, *“When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.”* He eventually found his place in life and became an

amazing mentor to the other boys, but he did not get there without help.



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If you are going through a difficult time, the Bible says that in the multitude of counselors there is safety. Prov. 11:14 Talk with someone you trust, or seek professional help. If you would like prayer, our pastoral department is available (559) 264-2300 or email us at info@secretsunsealed.org

CHALLENGE

- Discuss how the actions of the scribe and the crowd could have influenced the father's decision to seek help.
- How might the hidden characters have influenced the situation? Why?
- Choose a friend as a prayer partner. Pray for Jesus to give you both courage to stand up for what you believe in spite of what the “crowd” says or does.