

BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

3. The Covenant

Start off with feedback from Sunday's message. What did those that were there - or those that have caught up online - take away from it? What encouraged them, what informed them and what challenged them?

Read Mark 9.14-29

'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.'*

24 *Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!'*

- Out of an agitated crowd arguing theology, emerges a father in pain. Is the issue of faith and answered prayer more of a theoretical exercise for you, or has it ever been personal for you? Can you identify with this father?
- Have you ever held a 'Matrix Style' view of faith – that it's an almost magical quality, an ability to banish all doubt, free your mind and make yourself believe the impossible with absolute conviction? Why is this view of faith unhelpful?
- v24. *'I do believe; help my unbelief'*. Bringing our doubts honestly to Jesus and being real about our struggles to fully trust him is in itself an expression of faith. Discuss!
- Biblical faith, like hope and love, is a relationship word – it has to be expressed *in* someone. Have you always thought of faith as an expression of a trusting Covenant, or more in Contract terms? What difference does it make?
- v23. *'Everything is possible for one who believes'*. What does this mean in practice, given the Covenant model of faith/belief? Does it mean that God will always do everything we ask Him to?
- What would it look like for you to trust in God more fully – with your finances, your future, your relationships, your needs and your dreams?

Big Idea: 'Faith is a relationship word. Believing in God's reality, and his covenant goodness towards us, means we can trust Him for anything and through anything.'

Break into twos and threes and pray for a greater ability to trust in Jesus, particularly as it relates to the everyday challenges of real life. Pray for his help overcoming unbelief and any past disappointment. Pray in faith for the needs that you have right now. Finally, pray for those you know and love who don't know Jesus. Pray for them to find saving faith in him.