



WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Your Chapter In God's Never-ending Story

Week 8

Today's Theme: Great stories involve doubt.

Scripture Verses: Mark 9:14-29

Supplies:

- Paper & pens
- Paper, pencils, gold markers / paint

Opening Everyone Answers Question: (10min)

You want to get everyone talking here. This will set the tone for the meeting and introduce the theme.

- Describe a time when you have questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What was the outcome?

Scripture Exploration: (25 minutes)

This is the part of the study that you'll dig into Scripture so as to draw out the day's theme.

1. Read Mark 9:14- 19. In verse 19, Jesus says "You unbelieving generation... how long shall I put up with you?" Who do you think Jesus has in mind when he calls out this "unbelieving generation"?
 - a. Why do you think Jesus calls this generation "unbelieving" or "faithless"?
 - b. How long does Jesus "put up" with this unbelieving generation?

Despite calling out the unbelievers, Jesus doesn't walk away. He stays and heals the boy.

- c. What factors might contribute to people's unbelief today? Why?

- d. How, if at all, can stories like the ones we've been sharing in this small group study help people overcome their unbeliefs?
2. Read Mark 9:20-24. What do you think drives the father to ask Jesus for help – faith, despair, or something else? Why?

He might have felt anger, doubt, cynicism, helplessness, despair. We know that the father asks Jesus to help IF he can. He doesn't approach Jesus with full confidence in Jesus's power.

- a. This story leaves out a lot of details about the father. Why do you think the father approaches Jesus with doubt rather than full confidence in Jesus's power? Who or what might have contributed to his belief and doubts?
3. In response to the father, Jesus says in verse 23 "If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes." Do you really believe that all things can be done for the one who believes? Why or why not?

- a. Who or what has contributed to your ability (or lack thereof) to believe that ALL things can be done for the one who believes?
 - b. Think more broadly about your faith. When it comes to your faith, what is one doubt or question you're currently wrestling with?

In order to allow people to freely express their doubts / questions, be careful NOT to try to address each and every one of these. There is power in simply naming our doubts / questions to one another. Let this be one of those times.

- c. In general, do you feel like your doubts / questions push you closer to or farther away from Jesus? Why?
 - d. What about in our story. Do you think the father's doubt pushes him closer to or father away from Jesus? Why?
4. The father's statement in verse 24, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief," is one of the most honest, human statements in the bible. Do you think you can believe and not believe at the same time? Why or why not?
 - a. If so, tell us about a time when you simultaneously experienced belief and doubt. How did that experience impact your faith?
5. Besides the father, who else experiences doubt in this story? Why?

The disciples have been successfully healing others up to this point. Now they seem to lack the ability. Maybe they've begun to rely more on themselves than God.

Storytelling Practices (20 minutes):

Each week, we'll provide you with different storytelling practices designed to help your small group practice sharing their stories.

Doubt isn't the absence of faith. It's the questioning of faith. You can only doubt what you already believe.

Storytelling Practice #1 – Letters to God

Reflect on a time when you felt despair, cynicism, doubt, or lack of faith in God's power. Write a letter to God explaining the situation and asking all the questions you have about it. Why did it happen? Where was God? How could God let it happen? Really try to express all your questions. Then, knowing what you know about God's character, craft God's response to you.

Storytelling Practice #2: Kintsugi of the Heart

Kintsugi is the traditional Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with lacquer mixed with gold. Instead of throwing away an imperfect cup or bowl, the artist transforms it into something unique and beautiful. We as humans, loved by God, are the same way. When we experience doubt (cracks in our faith), that leaves a place for God to step in to fill those spots.



Leonard Cohen expressed this idea in his song *Anthem*.

*Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in*

Think about times in your life when you have experienced “cracks of doubt”. Where did you see God showing up to fill those seams? How were you changed? Draw a simple piece of pottery and add gold seams to represent those times. Leave some cracks without gold to reflect those places you still have doubt. Be prepared to talk about what the cracks in your pottery represent in your life and how God was revealed in the gold seams. It’s okay to talk about the empty seams too.

Storytelling (20 Minutes):

Your small group leader will direct you in sharing the stories you reflected on during the practices. Consider sharing all or part of your faith story at our ***What’s Your Story?*** storytelling event on November 17.

After giving your small group a few minutes to do their storytelling practice(s), invite people to share their story using whatever storytelling practice they experimented with. Allow people to share their doubts without trying “convince” them. Make sure people know they can share as much or as little of what they came up with as they’d like.

As people share, encourage them to think about sharing all or part of their faith story at our Storytelling Event on November 17.

Processing / Wrap-Up (10 minutes):

1. How easy or difficult was it for you to participate in tonight’s storytelling practices?
2. What was scary or intimidating to you about tonight’s storytelling practices?
3. What did you learn about yourself from tonight’s storytelling practices? About others in our small group?
4. As you thought about your own story, where did you see God at work?
5. Where did you encounter God during tonight’s small group?

Closing Prayer: