

# [ communication breakdown ]

## :: mark 9 ::

**Mark 9.1-50 -And He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”**

**Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” – because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.**

**And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.**

**Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant.**

**And they asked Him, saying, “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”**

**Then He answered and told them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.”**

**And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. And He asked the scribes, “What are you discussing with them?”**

**Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.”**

**He answered him and said, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.” Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.**

**So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?”**

**And he said, “From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”**

**Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.”**

**Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”**

**When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no**

more!” Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, “He is dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?”

So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”

Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. For He taught His disciples and said to them, “The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.” But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.

Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?” But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, “Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.” Now John answered Him, saying, “Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.” But Jesus said, “Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where *‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’*

And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where *‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’*

And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— where *‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’*

“For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.”

Immense passage here. What I’d like us to focus in on are the kinds of conversations taking place between Jesus and the other characters listed. Within these verses there is a lot of talking going on, but there are at least 3 different kinds of conversation we see taking place. We see people talking *with* Jesus, we see people talking *at* Jesus and we see people choosing *not* to respond to Jesus while He’s talking to them.

Unfortunately, it’s not a great passage for the disciples. Mark has highlighted a number of times the fact that they just weren’t getting it. But that should encourage us. Because we certainly

don't have perfect understanding or spiritual vision. So to see Jesus continually showing compassion and continually working with these guys and teaching them demonstrates how He feels about us as disciples. We have a better vantage point to understand what Jesus was talking about, but we're no more perfect than these guys. What we *can* do is look at these examples, see which ones were better and which were worse, and take to heart the things Jesus taught the people He was interacting with. Because conversation is important to the Lord. The way we communicate with Him is key to our understanding His teaching and His leading.

And He Himself emphasizes this in verses like Revelation 3:20, where we read:

**Revelation 3.20 - Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. (NLT)**

So many of the disciples missteps were connected to the fact that they did not understand what Jesus was trying to teach them at the time. We, certainly, want to understand what God is speaking to us and where He is leading us, and proper communication with Him is what will open up our hearts to understand.

So, first off we have the Transfiguration. Three specific verses we want to highlight when thinking about this theme of conversation.

First, verse 4:

**Mark 9.4 - And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.**

These two guys were sent from Abraham's Bosom on a very unusual mission. They got to the top of this hill and the Lord was transfigured, but they were there talking with Him. It seems almost out of place that they were just chatting it up.

But then contrast that with Peter's remark in verse 5:

**Mark 9.5-6 - Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" — because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.**

So, while Moses and Elijah talked *with* Jesus, Peter talked *at* Him. He had a whole plan all worked out. "Here's what we're gonna do. We're gonna start building tabernacles." Instead of just being witness to what was going on, Peter kinda starts to cowboy this situation and had made some rather serious assumptions.

The text points out that his talking at Jesus was motivated by his fear. What this means is that we as Christians have the potential of moving completely off course when we're allowing ourselves to act or think out of fear. Jesus had led them up this mountain and said, "hang out here, I want you to see this." But when the moment of fear came, Peter just started reaching out at whatever came to mind. And he's making some *very* bad plans here. What he was saying was blasphemous!

Instead of talking at Jesus, Peter should have just waited to see what the Lord wanted him to do.

That's the direction that God the Father gives him in verse 7:

**Mark 9.7 - And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud saying, 'This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!'**

God has given us Jesus and given us His word so that we can hear Him and know Him and understand what's going on. Because another theme you get out of this passage is that Jesus has a very specific, very important agenda. He's always talking to His guys about the future and He's mindful of what's about to happen to Him. He waits specific amounts of time to go up to the hilltop and a specific amount of time to heal the man's demon-possessed son. You get a sense of His timing and His purpose in doing things at specific points.

And that work continues in our lives today. As the Lord works out His plan through us with His purposeful timing. But if we haven't *heard* Him, if we're not listening for His leading, then we're bound to make mistakes like Peter was making.

Next we have the story of the boy being healed.

They get down the mountain and the other disciples are having an argument with the scribes and a bunch of people are hanging around watching it all happen.

Jesus puts a question to them, and all of them stay silent. Notice in verse 17 the *dad* has to speak up because the scribes (and the disciples) are refusing to talk to the Lord.

Now, one reason I think this may be the case is because of what the dad says there. He says, "Teacher I brought **YOU** my son." But then the disciples started trying to cast this demon out and they could not.

We can't necessarily fault them all the way because the Lord had previously empowered them to go out and do these sorts of miraculous things, but that's when He sent them out into the country. This is different. This dad brings his boy to see Jesus, who is nearby, but the disciples apparently said, "we got this." When they failed and when Jesus came back and tried to talk to them about it, they stay silent like the Scribes. The dad has to speak up.

This demonstrates to us that our pride is a big obstacle to Jesus speaking to us. These guys thought they could command this demon but they were wrong. They weren't prepared. They didn't quite understand the situation. And they assumed they were going to do just as well as Jesus Himself. It was pride that caused them to shut off communication with the Lord when the father originally came and pride that kept them from speaking up when Jesus asked what was going on.

Now, the father of this boy gets to have an interesting conversation with Christ. Remember, their discussion from verse 20 through 25 happens while the boy is convulsing and foaming at the mouth. And you see the heartbreak in the father's reply, which is to me one of the most comforting verses in all the Bible:

**Mark 9.24 - Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”**

This guy epitomizes humility to me. He’s in this terrible situation, he’s trying to help his son, but he understands that all of hope rests in Christ. He says, ‘You’re the one that will have to do this.’ And he meekly asks for compassion and for help and the faith to believe.

The Lord desires that we communicate with Him even in dire and difficult circumstances. We get all twisted up in our minds and think that we shouldn’t approach God in prayer or in thought until we have overcome our fears and our worries and until we’ve surmounted whatever problem we’re facing. But Jesus here wanted to speak to this dad and minister to him even while the boy was convulsing on the ground. Because God has a timing that includes ministry for many, not just for a few. Our inadequacy shouldn’t be an obstacle between us and the Lord. It should be a propellant. Because only Christ can deal with these issues. Our dependence is on Him so we are to go to Him in submission and humility and communicate openly. We shouldn’t wait to speak with Him, because His desire is to do something in our lives and in the lives of our families right now.

Now, you drop down to verses 33 through 37 and you see the disciples again choosing to not respond to Jesus when He talks to them. They were arguing over who would be the greatest in the Kingdom. Jesus then says something to them and they clam up. It’s comic but it’s sad. It’s embarrassing. But we sometimes do this too. Because we have our own agenda. And if we’re allowing ourselves to build an agenda for our own greatness, then we’re going to eventually come to the place where the Lord says to us, “*Who is the greatest in your life?*” Because, as we’ve seen, God already *has* an agenda. He already has a plan and a Kingdom and a place for us in His will. But if we’re trying to bring our own pride and our own greatness in on top of that, we’re eventually going to be embarrassed before the Lord. Because His will is that we serve others and humble ourselves and decrease so that He can increase. So if we’re focused on becoming greater and greater in this world or the next, then we’re going to get to a point where communication is broken down between us and the Lord. Because the human and the heavenly agendas cannot coexist. They are mutually exclusive, spiritually speaking.

Finally, John, trying to shift focus, gets all excited to tell Jesus about how they forbade this other guy from casting out demons in His name.

What’s funny is that a few verses ago they couldn’t cast out a demon themselves, but they’re quick to try to stop this other guy from doing it.

And, again, they’re sort of talking *at* Jesus. They’re trying to solve His problems for Him. Only this wasn’t a problem. It was a complete blunder that John and the other guys did this. They weren’t listening to the fact that Jesus wasn’t trying to make His message exclusive. He was calling people everywhere to repentance and salvation. But the disciples weren’t listening to that and they were getting all caught up in the fact that this other believer wasn’t under them, wasn’t regulated by them. He said, ‘because he does not follow **US**.’ Not ‘he does not follow you.’ And it’s this kind of propping ourselves up that really limits our conversation with Christ.

So what we see in this passage are examples of communication breakdown and communication connection. The father of the healed boy, he listened to Jesus and cast his life onto Jesus. He didn’t come with pride or fear. He came ready to hear from the Lord.

The disciples again and again failed to understand what the Lord was saying and doing in their midst. And the results were comedic at best but hurtful and blasphemous at worst.

If we want to be led up the mountain and equipped to minister and shown what's in store for us, we have to be in clear communication with our Lord. Not succumbing to fear, not bringing in our own agenda, not making assumptions about what the Lord needs us to do *for* Him, not filling ourselves up with pride. We need to hear Jesus, talk with Him, listen to what He says, go where He leads and do what He wants us to do.