

He is Able!

Big Idea:

This morning we took a look at the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from Daniel chapter 3. These three young men had a healthy understanding and awareness of the power of God- an awareness that affected their actions and beliefs at a core level. When we believe that God can and does work in our lives it will affect the way we live, the choices we make, and the lengths to which we are willing to go to influence others for the sake of His Kingdom. As we work through this study we will explore three main ideas: 1- God has the power to act and intervene in a way that changes our circumstances, 2- There are times when God doesn't answer our prayers in the way we want Him to, 3- As we progress deeper into faith, our attitude should become more like the young men in Daniel 3, who knew that God had the power to act, but also knew that even if He didn't it, wouldn't change what they believed about His nature.

ICE BREAKER:

When you think of the word power, what comes to mind? As a group, spend some talking about some of these examples of power (a storm, the ocean, monster trucks and other large vehicles, or anything else that comes to mind). What is it about these specific examples that communicates the idea of power?

CONVERSATION STARTER:

Often in the Gospels we see that Jesus acts in power when people believe that he will and can change their current reality. Whether you look at His first miracle at the wedding in Cana where he turned water to wine (Mary, Jesus mother knew what he could do if he chose to- John 2), or the four friends who believed so deeply that Jesus could heal their friend, they literally tore apart a roof to get to Him (Luke 5:17-26), it is clear that people believed both in the power of Jesus and His willingness to act on their behalf. John even tells us toward the end of his gospel that, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book, but these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:30-31).

God wanted the residents of first century Palestine to know that he had the power to act and the desire to do so- all so that those who witnessed or read about His power might believe Jesus is the Christ, give glory to God, and because of this find life in His name! Today we will look at two stories from the

Gospels that will hopefully help paint a clear picture of the way Jesus interacted with people while on earth. The question then will be, how does Jesus relate to us today?

THINK:

1. The Greek word for power is *dunamis*. Can you think of an English word that sounds similar to this Greek word? If you said dynamite you are correct. In what way could the power of God be compared to dynamite?
2. We know God acted in power during the time Jesus walked the earth- and many times before as well. Does God still act in power today? In what ways have you seen God act?
3. There are some barriers to believing God still acts in our world today the way He did through His son, Jesus Christ. What causes us to doubt His power today? What causes us to doubt that He will or does act in our world and time?
4. How does this morning's story from Daniel 3 relate to this discussion, especially the words spoken by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, "the God we serve is able to deliver us..., but even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."?

EXAMINE:

As we examine these two passages of scripture, I hope you will find comfort in your faith journey. When we doubt God's power to act, we are not alone- there were people during the time Jesus walked the earth who had witnessed or heard about the miracles of Jesus, but were unsure as to whether or not He would act to change their situations. God wants to strengthen and grow our faith so that we trust both His ability and His wisdom to act on behalf of His people.

1. Read Luke 5:12-16. What stands out to you about the Lepers encounter with Jesus?
2. I think most, if not all of us believe that God can act. Do you ever find yourself identifying with the Leper when he says to Jesus, "If you are willing...?"
3. Do you find any comfort in the response of Jesus? – "I am willing."
4. There are times when we ask God for something and he doesn't respond the way we hoped he would. This can be difficult to handle and at times does shake our faith. How do we deal with the times when God doesn't answer our prayers the way we want Him to?

5. Read Mark 9:14-29. Like the father in this story, have you ever found yourself desperate for the intervention of God?
6. Can you identify with the sentiment behind father's words, "I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief." Does this indicate that the father had/didn't have a "perfect" faith? (This is important because there are some who would assert that if God didn't act, our faith just wasn't big enough, but Jesus was willing to act even though this man's faith wasn't perfect. So...like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego can we trust that God can act on our behalf, but then have the same attitude that even if He doesn't, it won't change our faith in His power/ability?...)

THIS WEEK: We have worked through a difficult study today. It's difficult because some of the questions we have posed are challenging on a very deep, very real level. We should acknowledge this reality. This week, if some of what you have worked through as a small group has raised some additional questions, be open with God, the Father. Jesus wasn't upset with the "less than perfect" faith of the leper and the father in the two stories from Luke 5 and Mark 9- He will accept you where you are as well.

*"I do believe, help me
overcome my unbelief!"
Mark 9:24*