



Matthew 17:14-27

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING: BACK TO REAL LIFE

The vision on the mountain has lifted the disciples out of the present situation and shown them a foretaste of future glory. Now as they come back down from the mountain, they are brought rudely back to the present as they find their fellow disciples in severe difficulties with an attempted exorcism which has gone wrong. ...The parallel with Moses' experience at Sinai is suggestive: he came down from the mountain with the tablets of God's revelation and was faced by a scene of religious apostasy which caused him to break the tablets in his anger. ...The effect of this passage is to issue a salutary warning to the disciples, and through them to all who seek to draw on the miraculous power of Jesus, that there is nothing automatic about such power, and it may not be taken for granted. —R.T. France

The Transfiguration takes place sometime in the fall, possibly right before the Feast of Tabernacles and about six months before Jesus will be crucified in Jerusalem. As He heads toward the cross, Jesus continues to train and prepare His disciples. After descending from the great glory of the mountaintop, the disciples are immediately confronted with the stark realities of life down in the valley.

THE BATTLE IS REAL... so keep growing in your faith! (17:14-21)

- **What are the disciples confronted with?**

A huge _____ (17:14; Mark 9:14; Luke 9:37)

A huge _____ (Mark 9:14)

A huge _____ (17:15; Mark 9:17-22; Luke 9:39)

A Few Biblical Facts about Satan & Demons

- Satan is real and active but also limited in power (Job 1; Ezekiel 28).
- Satan's full force was targeted at Jesus during His life (Rev. 12:1-5).
- Satan's power was broken by Jesus' death and resurrection (Col. 2:15).
- In the NT epistles to the church, Christians are not commanded to cast out demons but to resist them (Eph. 6:10-20; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; James 4:7-8).
- Satan's weapon against us is deception; our weapon against him is God's truth (Matt. 4:1-11; John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:14; Eph. 6:10-20; Rev. 12:11).

A huge _____ (17:16; Mark 9:18; Luke 9:40)

The disciples' failures are a recurring theme throughout this section.

—D. A. Carson

The key distinctive in this passage is His disciples' inability to deal with the problem. Their impotence makes for a jarring return to the real world after the mountaintop experience of the transfiguration.

—Craig L. Blomberg

Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.

—Ian MaLaren (1850-1907)

The truth of the matter is that demon possession and casting out demons is hardly ever referred to in Scripture. It's very rarely referred to in the pages of the OT and it's hardly referred to in the NT either, outside of the Gospels.

—Sinclair Ferguson

Epileptic. Grk, *selēniazomai*, "to be moonstruck or lunatic." The ancient world was familiar with epilepsy and did not attribute it to demons. Thus, this is a case of a young man who is demonized, manifesting in frequent seizures, foaming at the mouth, deafness, muteness, gnashing teeth, intense suffering, and suicide attempts.

- **What does Jesus say is the bigger problem in all of this?**

That generation lacks _____ in God as evidenced by their persistent disobedience to God’s commands (cf. Deut. 32:5, 20).

His disciples lack _____ in God as evidenced by their lack of consistent and humble _____ (Eph. 6:18; 1 Th. 5:17).

- **What does Jesus want to teach His disciples?**

We cannot do _____ without a true faith in Him.

We can do _____ (that God calls us to do) with a true, humble, obedient, growing faith in Him (cf. Phil. 4:10-13).

THE BATTLE IS WON... so keep your eyes on Jesus Christ! (17:22-23)

Jesus’ death and resurrection not only saved us from sin but also saved us from the kingdom and control of Satan (Col. 1:13). Satan is disarmed (Col. 2:15) and the only territory he can have in our lives is the territory that we yield to him through sin, bitterness, and deception (Eph. 4:27; 2 Cor. 11:3).

The disciples are exceedingly sorrowful because they do not see the power of the cross of Christ and the hope of His resurrection (cf. Rom. 5:1-11).

THE BATTLE IS EVERYWHERE... so choose your battles wisely! (17:24-27)

- **The Problem.** *Your Teacher pays the temple tax, doesn’t He?*

The temple tax was a yearly tax of two drachma (about two days’ wages) collected for temple maintenance (Ex. 30:11-16; 2 Chr. 24:9; Neh. 10:32).

- **The Parable.** *The king’s sons are exempt from the king’s taxes.*
- **The Provision.** *Peter catches a fish with a coin in its mouth.*
- **The Principle.** *It is best to avoid offense on secondary matters.*

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more... To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. (1 Corin. 9:19, 22)

The disciples had long been successful in this work and now they are surprised by their failure. But their faith is poor and shoddy. They are treating the authority given them like a gift of magic... Jesus tells them that this case requires prayer—not a form or an approved rite, but an entire life bathed in prayer and its concomitant faith. —D. A. Carson

The worst sin is prayerlessness. —P. T. Forsyth

Coin. Grk, *stater*, “four drachma.”

The female St. Peter’s fish carries her eggs in her mouth to protect them against predators. ...After the young mature...the mother fish often keeps a substitute in her mouth to perpetuate her habit of carrying her young. —Dr. James Fleming

While there are times when a disciple must make an unpopular stand and so alienate others, many of the issues and practices on which we might legitimately differ are not worth fighting over. —R. T. France

There is deep wisdom in these five words, “lest we should offend them.” They teach us plainly that there are matters in which Christ’s people ought to forego their own opinions, and submit to requirements which they may not approve rather than give offense and hinder the gospel of Christ. It may seem very heroic to be always standing out tenaciously for our rights. But it may well be doubted, with such a passage as this, whether such tenacity is always wise and shows the mind of Christ. —J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)