

## The Story of Jesus

### Part 22: The Myth of Self-Reliance

Mark 9:14-29 - [Watch online](#)

#### Summary:

Self-reliance only creates stress, worry, and fear. There's a better way. The way of Jesus. The way of trust.

#### Main Ideas:

[01:26] We've been told the solution to our worries is self-reliance.

[02:06] The problem with self-reliance is that deep down we know we aren't that reliable.

[02:59] Trust eliminates the need for stressful self-reliance.

[06:39] Self-reliance forces us to focus on ourselves instead of the needs of others.

[08:10] When we're convinced we have it all together we usually end up proving otherwise.

[09:50] We all experience a mixture of belief and unbelief.

[10:21] Our doubts are not an obstacle for Jesus.

[12:25] Life in the Kingdom of God is completely dependent on God himself.

[12:59] Following Jesus requires choosing to trust even in the midst of our doubts.

[17:10] The life Jesus offers is a life of confident trust in the love and power of our Heavenly Father.

#### Invitation: [13:33]

What do you need to bring to Jesus?

Read Psalm 18:1-2 daily.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. Jon said self-reliance often leads to stress and worry. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
  - What are some examples of situations in your life where you've felt the pressure to rely solely on yourself?
2. In what way(s) do you think self-reliance and doubt relate to each other?
3. Read Psalm 18:1-2 and Colossians 2:6-7. How do you think these passages relate to dealing with our doubts and rejecting self-reliance?
4. What steps or practices do you feel would help you choose to trust even in the midst of your doubts?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

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#### Transcript:

**IN:** You're going to die.

And if you're anything like me it'll probably come sooner than expected... b/c of the stress that seems to permeate our lives.

I'm guessing you're tired of being stressed? Worried? Overthinking? Overworking?

Physically/mentally/emotionally drained? And if you're not now... you probably will be.

You're not alone. Seems to be an epidemic of stress...

There is a solution.

- It's simple but takes practice.
- The first step is small but incredibly difficult.
- It's something I'm still working on

And once again it all has to do with, you guessed it... Jesus.

Hard to believe? That's exactly what this episode is about... so let's talk about it... together.

**WE:** I worry about so much... Little things like as ending last basketball game already worrying about getting right coach for next season.

- Start thinking of ways to make sure we sign up early, etc.

And of course big things... kids, job, health, future.

- What can I do better, more of, what solution have I not thought of yet? What am I forgetting to do?

B/c, like all of us, I've been bombarded my whole life with the value of self-reliance.

- We're told if we just believe in ourselves, have confidence in who we are, work hard we can conquer any challenges...

We've been told the solution to our worries is self-reliance.

- Then why do I still worry/stress?
- I'm too lazy, low self-esteem (never been a problem for me)
- Just believe in myself and get to work right?

Well... Self-reliance seems great until we realize it means we have to rely on ourselves...

Problem is... I know something you don't... I'm not that great... just ask my wife

- I'm not always quick thinking.
- I don't always see outside the box beyond my immediate surroundings
- I'm not as smart as I look

I know myself pretty well and am painfully aware of my shortcomings and also know I don't even know all of my weaknesses.

The problem with self-reliance is that deep down we know we aren't that reliable.

- We know our weaknesses (whether we admit them or not)
- We know we are often not the smartest/most capable in the room
- We don't have it all together like everyone else seems to

So we stress / worry / overthink / overwork.

- Trying to prove to ourselves/others that we are more reliable than we know we are.
- Which leads to burn out/fractured relationships/actual health issues/

There's a much better way...

And every time I remember it and actually put it into practice it relieves the stress / worry / over thinking.

- It allows me to actually enjoy the "now" and sleep at night.

I've seen it change lives and get people through some of the most stressful times with confidence / peace / even joy.

So for the next 15-20 min we'll discover the solution... Trust eliminates the need for stressful self-reliance.

This idea is perfectly illustrated in a scene in the Story of Jesus...

**GOD:** Around AD 70 a companion of the Apostle Pauls and a follower of the Apostle Peter's named Mark recorded what is believed to be Peter's experience of following Jesus...

And in this account we saw last time that... One day, the disciples Peter, James, John went up a mountain with Jesus.

While up there, the curtain between the physical world and the spiritual world was pulled back and they saw Jesus for who he really is 100% God/Man...

- If you think that's hard to believe, imagine being the ones who saw it and had to process it...
- Couldn't comprehend it...

But while they were away, the other disciples got themselves into some trouble...

**V. 14-18** First, I know demons... hard to believe... seems more superstitious than reality.

- Mark and NT just assume the existence of demons w/o much explanation...
- They know what we seem to have forgotten... the spiritual world is as real as the physical world.
- And not everything in the spiritual world is happy rainbows.

But don't these symptoms just seem like epilepsy?

Maybe but as we've seen, the ancients weren't as uneducated as we think...

- Mark records Jesus healing both diseases and demon possession... he always makes the distinction.

And Jesus as we see takes this possession seriously... and if someone can predict their death and resurrection and pull it off I'll take their word for pretty much anything else.

Now to get the point of the story I don't think you personally right now have to believe in angels/demons... chalk it up to epilepsy if you want... but even then watch what happens.

Such a sad scene really... this desperate father comes looking for Jesus to heal his son

- But Jesus is away up on the mountain
- So the father has to settle for the B team... The disciples.

And these guys had seen Jesus cast out demons... they had even done it themselves

- So they probably think no sweat... we're pro's now... we know the formula...we got this...

- So maybe Andrew steps up and tries to cast out the demon... but it doesn't work...
- So Matthew says... move over let me do it... doesn't work
- They maybe one after another... maybe then together... and they can't do it

And to make things worse, the teachers of religious law, no fans of Jesus, are there watching...

- Maybe start jeering, scolding, mocking, telling them they are using the wrong words?
- Which then makes the disciples argue back...
- And a crowd gathers to watch b/c there's nothing to watch on their nonexistent tvs

All the while, this desperate father who just wants his son to be healed... seems to have been forgotten.

Self-reliance forces us to focus on ourselves instead of the needs of others.

We get so caught up in trying to prove we can do it and focused on what we need to get done that we forget what/who we are doing these things for in the first place.

And Jesus has had enough... **v. 19** "Them"- probably means the disciples

The disciples actually did have faith... but in the wrong thing.

They were relying on themselves, their own abilities, experience, and supposed expertise to take care of the situation.

They thought THEY could handle this demon

But their ability never came from their knowledge, power, ability... **Mark 3:14-15**

They had been successful before b/c Jesus had given them the authority...

- They had relied on HIS authority not their own.

Their earlier successes made them start believing their own hype... they had this. They were hot stuff.

- Even decided to argue with the religious teachers... b/c "They knew what they were doing"

They had fooled themselves but they weren't fooling anyone else... especially the demon.

When we're convinced we have it all together we usually end up proving otherwise.

And Jesus says... "You guys still don't get it?! How long am I going to have to put up with this... You don't have to rely on yourself/have it figured out."

Just trust... ME!

And he knows the solution isn't another lesson or bible study... but to show them again who he really is and display the liberating power of God...

He says, "Now do what you should've done in the first place... Bring the boy to me."

**V. 20-22** Showing the possession isn't just sickness but a demon intent on harming/killing the boy.

The father obviously is done trying to fix it or cope with it himself... knows he can't do it... can't rely on himself...

- Hoped the disciples were reliable... weren't.
- "Jesus are you reliable... please do something... if you can."

**V. 23-24** Jesus- Probably with twinkle in eye, "What is this "if you can" stuff? Just believe and it will happen."

And the father says one of the most profound, sincere, and relatable sentences...

- I do believe. But help me overcome my unbelief

He's showing us a universal truth... We all experience a mixture of belief and unbelief.

It's part of the human experience.

- This father is caught in that shadowy world between faith and doubt.
- Not sure what is true and isn't... not sure who/what can be trusted and what can't

But here's the key... he doesn't dwell on his unbelief.

- He doesn't hide from his doubts.
- He doesn't pretend he has it all figured out.

In his desperation he yells out the honest truth. "I believe... I want to believe... but I still have doubts."

But it wasn't the doubts that mattered, it was his willingness to trust Jesus despite his doubts that actually mattered

Our doubts are not an obstacle for Jesus.

The father's faith/trust, no matter how uncertain, was enough for Jesus.

**V. 25-27** Demon might have been able to resist disciples but now is completely out of its league.

- "I command you"... the authority is in himself
- Jesus is showing he is the one with ALL authority.

The disciples had forgotten they could only do the things they did b/c Jesus had given them HIS authority.

I love the touch of... "and never enter him again"

- Adding some extra reassurance for this fearful father that his son is permanently free and healed.

**V. 28-29** What's the deal, Jesus?

Jesus- Yeah that situation needed prayer.

1st: Not really saying different types of demons require different types of exorcism.

- Different types of demons? Unclear.

Also... Not saying the problem was they didn't say the right magic prayer words, didn't pray hard enough, or forgot to pray right then...

- Notice Jesus didn't pray right then either.

But he did live his life in total dependence on God the Father.

- He was in regular/constant/consistent communication with him.
- His life was a life of prayer... fully reliant on the Father.

He's saying you guys failed b/c you forgot a primary principle of the KoG... Life in the Kingdom of God is completely dependent on God himself.

They had become careless and thought of themselves as the experts.

- Had it all figured out and could just do things on their own

They needed a reeducation on how the KoG works.

**Transition:** OK... So does this passage tell us that if we believe hard enough we will get whatever we ask for?

If we've prayed for something and it doesn't happen the way we want, it's our fault b/c we don't have enough faith?

Not at all... so much damage has been done with that kind of Xianity.

The point is... Following Jesus requires choosing to trust even in the midst of our doubts.

- Even if things don't work out the way we were wanting... we can trust (even in our doubts) that Jesus loves us and has all authority and knows what he is doing.
- We don't have to try to figure things out ourselves... we don't have to make our own luck... we don't have to push for our own way...
- We can trust his timing, authority and love.

**YOU:** When the disciples realized they couldn't rely on themselves to heal the boy...

- When the father had almost lost all hope... what did Jesus say?

"Bring the boy to me." - Bring him to the one who has the authority and power to do something about it.

So let me ask you... What do you need to bring to Jesus? What have you been relying on yourself to fix/figure out/solve?

Maybe it is your kids... he says bring me the boy/girl

Bring me the job -fear -worry -future -meeting -situation -anger -resentment -grief -project -assignment -relationship -conversation -financial/health crisis... bring it to ME.

Jesus says... Make the choice to trust me and I'll help you with your unbelief.

I don't care that you still have doubts... that won't stop me from acting.

- Use whatever trust you have and bring it to me

Everytime I forget this... I get worked up, worried, stressed, irritable... especially money stuff.

But when I remember who is with me and remember to just bring it to Jesus... there's a peace, even excitement to see what he will do... and so far he has always come through.

So whatever it is, bring it to him and trust him to do what he will do in his perfect love and timing...

As you continue to practice choosing to trust... Read this prayer (daily?) that has been encouraging and strengthening God's people for 1000's of years

- **Read Psalm 18:1-2 Daily**... put it on a card on your mirror/fridge/office/car...

**WE:** Self-reliance has been held up to us as one of the core values of American society...

- But it only creates stress/worry/and fear.

The Jesus way is so much better...

- We don't have to have it all figured out
- We can simply trust that he does and live in his love and care...
- and confidently step into each day knowing whatever comes he is with us.

It's a lot like a toddler standing on the edge of a pool for the 1st time

- Our Heavenly Father is saying jump... I'll catch you.
- But I don't know how to swim, I've never done this before, what if I sink... I'm scared.
- We stand there debating... what will win our fear or our trust...
- And even though we are scared and not sure of what will happen we finally say, "I believe but help me in my doubt."
- And we jump... hit the water, our head goes under
- But then... hands stronger than we expected grab onto us and lift us up.
- And laughing we cling to his neck as he holds us afloat...

And then what happens? What does every kid do once they make that first jump? Yell, "Do it again!"

And with every jump we learn to trust our Father more and more.

That is the daily life Jesus offers us.

A life of conquering fear not by relying on believing in ourselves... but trusting Jesus, with our doubts and all.

We are invited to take that first jump and to keep jumping everyday as he continues to catch us... overcoming our doubts with his strength and his love.

**The life Jesus offers is a life of confident trust in the love and power of our Heavenly Father.**