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The God of the Gap

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The desperate father brought his son to the disciples of Jesus. He pleaded with them to cast out the demon that had tormented his son from childhood. Because the disciples had seen Jesus cast out demons and had done so themselves, I suspect one of them stepped forward and commanded the evil spirit to leave.

When the "name of Jesus" doesn't work

That exact process had never failed . . . at least, there's no biblical evidence of a failure. Evil spirits obeyed their command to leave. In fact, they had successfully cast out "many demons" (Mark 6:13).

But this deeply rooted demon, the one holding the boy hostage, refused to leave. No matter how many times the disciples may have evoked the name of Jesus, the demon's roots held tight.

The teachers of the law saw the disciple's impotence. I suspect a disrespectful comment erupted into a raucous argument. These teachers of the Law viewed Jesus as a fraud who broke their sacred traditions and encouraged others to follow His example . . . He blasphemed God by claiming to be the Son of God—making Himself equal to God.

The teachers routinely followed Jesus, hoping to catch Him saying or doing something that would justify bringing legal charges against Him. The disciple's failure to cast out the demon must have delighted them. After all, it undermined the credibility of Jesus, who claimed authority over evil spirits. Authority he had delegated to His disciples (Luke 9:12).

While this noisy commotion grew louder, Jesus, along with Peter, James and John finished their descent from Mt. Hermon and entered the city. The night before Jesus had pulled back the veil of his humanity and revealed the glory of His divine nature. In that moment, God the Father spoke audibly, "This is my beloved Son, My Chosen One, in Whom I'm well pleased."

Jesus and the disciples left the presence of God and entered a satanic stronghold—the town of Caesarea Philippi. A town known for its pagan temples. They left the Father's blessing and faced the teacher's wrath.

A Glimpse of What's to Come

The father of the boy declared that he had brought his son to Jesus to heal him (Mark 9:17). A casual reading shows that he hadn't brought his son to Jesus, but to the disciples of Jesus. Take note of this: *in the father's mind, a disciple so completely represented Jesus that bringing his son to the disciples was the same as bringing him to Jesus.*

The outcome would have been better except for a flaw in the disciple's belief system. I'll get back to this in a moment, but first . . .

Mark tells us, "The father pleaded with Jesus, '*If You can do anything*, take pity on us and help us.'" (Mark 9:22).

Those three words caught the Lord's attention like a bolt of lightning. "If you can?" Jesus asked.

And then He said this: *"Everything is possible for the one who believes." (Mark 9:23).*

This statement sheds light on the disciple's inability to cast out the demon. The weakness of the father's faith is understandable. He hadn't been with Jesus day and night. The disciples had. Why was their faith lacking?

After Jesus made His declaration, the father said, "I do believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

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There it is. The man brought to Jesus the faith he had, and Jesus bridged the gap between the faith he had and the faith he needed. He only had to ask.

Jesus then commanded the demon to leave the boy and never enter him again. The evil spirit obeyed. But not before tormenting the boy one last time. Mark reported, "The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." [27] But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up" (Mark 9:26-27).

I read that story one day and it occurred to me that Jesus is the God of the Gap. We can only bring Him the faith we have, no more. He is the bridge that spans the gap between our small faith and the big faith needed to drive away evil and bring healing.

So simple yet profound.

Later the disciples asked Him privately, "Why couldn't we cast it out?" (Mark 9:29). The Lord's response provided His disciples with an important truth. If they didn't get this, they would fail. As they already had.

Here's His answer, "Because you have so little faith . . . this kind only come out by prayer and fasting."

With a single sentence Jesus revealed the flaw in the disciple's belief system. I wonder if the disciples had cast out so many demons "in the name of Jesus," that they had ritualized the process. Walk with Jesus through the gospels and you'll see He maintained a connection with the Father through prayer. Did the disciples forget this key to effective living and ministry? Did they fail to remember faith is strengthened through prayer? I suspect the disciples saw no need for prayer since they had the three magic words.

However, the gates of hell were broken when Jesus told His disciples they had no power because they had no prayer. Clear and simple. The boy's father had a weak faith, but his prayer to Jesus bridged the gap between the faith he had and the faith he needed. The result? Jesus cast out the demon and restored the boy to health.

Did you know Jesus is the God of the Gap?

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