



Living with integrity

Discovering ways to live with integrity, being the same person on the inside and outside.

## REVIEW

Recap on your experience of the challenge. Ask the following questions:

### How did it go? Was it helpful?

If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question:

### Where and how did you experience God last week?

## REAL LYFE

## FAITH & DOUBT

Martin Luther, Billy Graham, Mother Teresa and many other spiritual giants have confessed their doubts about God. In truth we are probably a mixture of faith and doubt. It's good to know that faith and doubt can co-exist. There is much in this world to convince us of the goodness and reality of God (the birth of a baby, a beautiful view, answers to prayers) and much to cause even the most faith-filled people to question God (suffering, senseless tragedy, silence of God). Ultimately our faith comes down to trusting a person – Jesus, who seemed to believe in the reality of God and his kingdom as easily as we believe in gravity.

## READ

### † Mark 9.14-29

## Jesus Heals a Boy

<sup>14</sup> When Jesus and his three disciples came back down, they saw a large crowd around the other disciples. The teachers of the Law of Moses were arguing with them.

<sup>15</sup> The crowd was really surprised to see Jesus, and everyone hurried over to greet him.

<sup>16</sup> Jesus asked, "What are you arguing about?"

<sup>17</sup> Someone from the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought

my son to you. A demon keeps him from talking. <sup>18</sup> Whenever the demon attacks my son, it throws him to the ground and makes him foam at the mouth and grit his teeth in pain. Then he becomes stiff. I asked your disciples to force out the demon, but they couldn't do it."

<sup>19</sup> Jesus said, "You people don't have any faith! How much longer must I be with you? Why do I have to put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

<sup>20</sup> They brought the boy, and as soon as the demon saw Jesus, it made the boy shake all over. He fell down and began rolling on

the ground and foaming at the mouth.

<sup>21</sup> Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"

The man answered, "Ever since he was a child. <sup>22</sup> The demon has often tried to kill him by throwing him into a fire or into water. Please have pity and help us if you can!"

<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, "Why do you say 'if you can'? Anything is possible for someone who has faith!"

<sup>24</sup> Right away the boy's father shouted, "I do have faith! Please help me to have even more."

<sup>25</sup> When Jesus saw that a crowd was gathering fast, he spoke sternly to the evil spirit that had kept the boy from speaking or hearing. He said, "I order you to come out of the boy! Don't ever bother him again."

<sup>26</sup> The spirit screamed and made the boy shake all over. Then it

went out of him. The boy looked dead, and almost everyone said he was. <sup>27</sup> But Jesus took hold of his hand and helped him stand up.

<sup>28</sup> After Jesus and the disciples had gone back home and were alone, they asked him, "Why couldn't we force out that

demon?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "Only prayer can force out that kind of demon."

Contemporary English Version - CEV

## REFLECT

Setting the scene:

- ▶ Three of the disciples (Peter, James and John) had just witnessed the incredible 'Transfiguration'. They were returning from the mountain with Jesus (asking all kinds of questions to try and comprehend what had just happened) and run into a situation whereby the other disciples failure to heal a boy was causing a commotion.
- ▶ There is doubt and lack of faith all over this event. The Scribes' 'argument' may well have been over the disciples failure to

produce healing, the disciples were wondering why they hadn't the power to perform the healing, the father is also doubting the disciples ability and the crowd were at best confused by the whole situation.

- ▶ Jesus' words (probably addressed to the crowds, rather than the disciples) in v19 are a partial quote from Psalm 95.10 regarding God's patience with faithless generations. In doing so he draws the crowd's attention away from the failure of the disciples.
- ▶ The father's key word in his statement is 'help us **if** you can' - he is probably weary

of his boy's suffering, that has nearly killed him, weary of not being able to help him and has almost lost hope. He confesses his doubts, appealing to Jesus to create in him a heart that can believe more firmly. Jesus responds with compassion and restores the boy's health and gives him a new future.

- ▶ What are the 'shockers' and 'blockers' for you in this passage?
- ▶ Do you think that doubt and faith can co-exist?
- ▶ What encourages you to believe in God? What causes questions and doubts?

## I RESPOND

Faith & Doubt challenge:

This week create a challenge that might help you to increase your faith in God.

### Challenge ideas:

If you struggle to come up with your own challenge then why not try one of the following...

#### 01 Reasons for God

You might like to investigate this further and read some good books on this theme – for example, Dr Tim Keller's book *Reason for God* is a *New York Times* bestseller and explores subjects such as suffering, the Bible, evidence

for the existence of God. You might also be interested in Andy Frost's book *Losing Faith* which features the stories of nine people who have struggled to believe. John Ortberg's book *Faith and Doubt* is also a great read on this theme.

#### 02 Lectio Your Doubts

You could explore this Scripture passage further by using a practice called Lectio Divina. As you re-read through this 'sessions' passage several times, you might like to have a conversation with God about your own questions and doubts – knowing that God understands our partial knowledge of him and our limited

human abilities to understand.

You might like to follow this up in conversation with a compassionate and wise Christian leader to talk it through.

#### 03 Faith Building

How about taking a small risk everyday this week – you might like to pray for someone specifically, ask God to reveal his care and compassion towards you, talk to someone about faith (and doubt). You might like to show compassion towards someone who is struggling and as you do, ask that God may open their eyes to the reality of his presence with them.

### Don't Forget

1. To record your experience of the challenge so that you can accurately share it with your lyfe group when you next meet. You might like to text/tweet each other throughout the experience!
2. Consider posting your created challenge on the lyfe facebook site for others to view.

### More resources on 'Real Lyfe'

- Watch video interviews with John Ortberg
- Read article on *Losing Faith* by Andy Frost
- Read 'lyfe story' biographies on Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Desmond Tutu