KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material

Matthew 17:14-27

Week of 14th of April

A Faithless and Twisted Generation

Leader Preparation

Please read through the passage, and note down some points that stand out for you. The notes from pages 23-25 are helpful.

Some key focus areas that may be relevant to your group:

- A comparison of the account of the demon possessed boy (and his father), with the Canaanite woman (and her daughter) in Matthew 15:21-28.
- LITTLE FAITH in the disciples (see Matt 6:30, 8:26, 14:31, 16:8 & now 17:20)
- How to live out our freedom as Christians (Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1)

Don't feel that you need to cover everything! Pick what is relevant to your group.

Group Time:

Faith is not only something that gets expressed at church! If you think through the following instances, what do we place our faith in when we do the following things?

1. Sit down on a chair
2. Get onto an aeroplane to travel somewhere
3. Place an online order
4. Post a letter into a postbox (remember doing this?!)
5. Turn on a light switch
6. Fill up your car with petrol

Does the result of your action depend on how much you BELIEVE in the outcome?
Does it depend on the reliability of the object of your trust?

Share about a time when someone trusted you to do something important to them.

Exploring the Passage

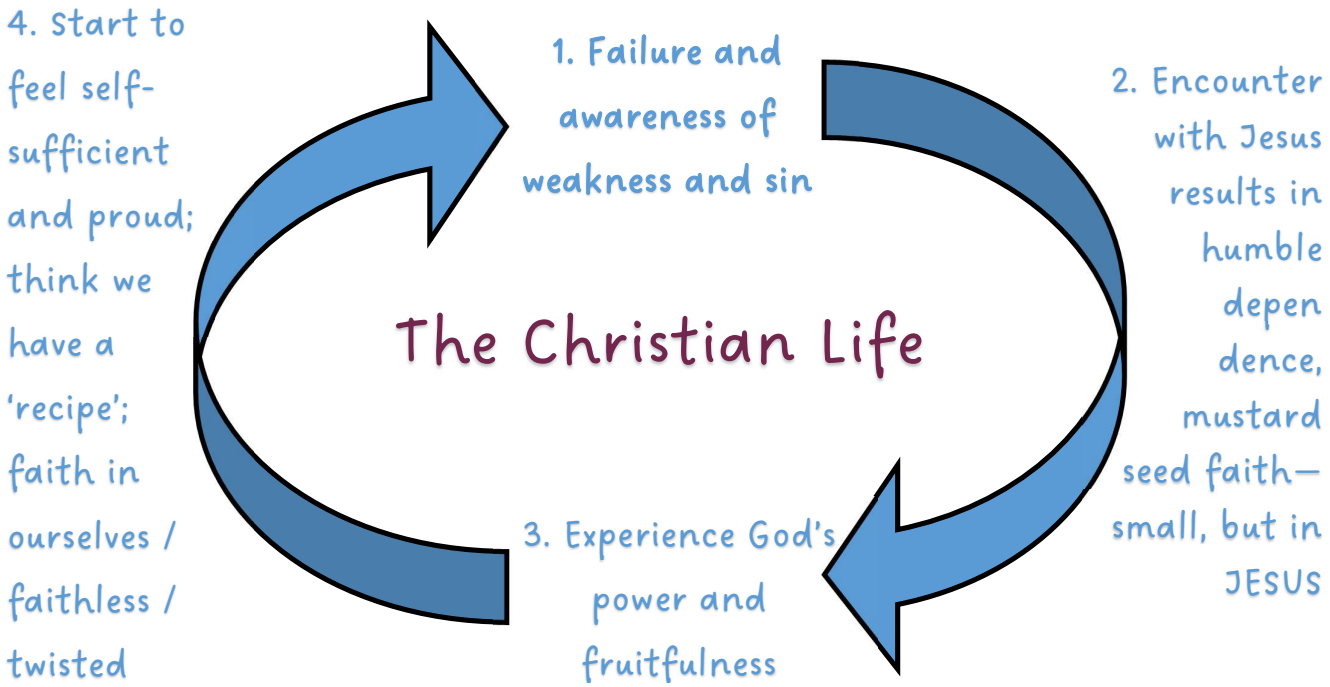
READ Matthew 17:14-27

Oh you of little faith

This was not the first time in the book of Matthew that the disciples failed at something! Have a look at each of these reminders of times that Jesus pointed out the disciples' LITTLE FAITH:

- Matthew 6:30
- Matthew 8:26
- Matthew 14:31
- Matthew 16:8
- Matthew 17:20

These stories of the lows in the disciples' faith journeys echo in a lot of ways a pattern that happens in many of our lives:



Just like the disciples on a "good" day, we start off recognizing who Jesus is, realizing that we are weak, undeserving and sinful, humbling ourselves and depending on him to equip us for the work he asks us to do (like the disciples when they were first sent out). As we walk close to Jesus, we experience God at work in us an through us. At some point, we start to feel quite pleased. We think we know the "magic words" that Jesus wants us to use. We're sure that we have all the moves figured out. We forget who is really responsible for our growth and the deeds we have seen. And we rely on our own strength and understanding.

The solutions to problems in the world often change, but the person we need to trust never does:

> *"Real faith is less magic than trust, less rite than relationship. It does not so much seek to exercise power as to know, obey, love, and serve God." (DA Carson).*

What keeps us walking with Jesus is prayer and relationship with him. Faith is not dependent on a particular outcome, but on a person – strong faith is strong when its object is solid.

- What do you think of this cycle of "faith and failure"? Can you relate to it?
- How can you strengthen your relationship with Jesus to prevent you from falling into pride and failure?
- How should you adjust when you find yourself back in that place of pride and failure?

Don't miss it!

The disciples NEVER seem to absorb Jesus' prediction of his resurrection – they always just react to his mention of his death

- What difference does it make in your life that Jesus not only died but also rose again

Temple tax

- What was the temple tax originally for? (See Exodus 30:11-16)
- Who collected it, and for what?
- Why would Jesus be entitled to say that he did not need to pay the temple tax?
- Why did he choose to pay it?
- What else did Jesus choose to pay that he was not obligated to?
- How should this affect our attitude to sacrifice? (Romans 14:1-9)
- Are there rules that you choose to follow, not because you have to, but for other reasons? (1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1)

Prayer

Pray together: consider breaking from the large group into men and women, or groups of 3 or 4. Share any prayer needs, and pray for one another.