

LESSON 2: HANDLING YOUR DOUBTS

This includes:

- 1. LEADER PREPARATION**
- 2. LESSON GUIDE**

1. LEADER PREPARATION**LESSON OVERVIEW**

Doubt is something we all deal with in life. We have seen how people have failed us, and we've likely felt like we've failed God because of our struggles and weaknesses. Because of those and other factors, many of us end up wrestling with doubt. But doubt is not a sin—it is part of most people's faith journey. What we do with our doubt will impact how we move into or out of freedom.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- 1. WHAT:** Doubt is not a sin, but it can derail our faith if we don't examine it, so we need to take our doubts to Jesus and ask for his help.
- 2. WHY:** Teenagers can feel guilty because of their doubts, but Jesus does not reject them when they struggle to believe.
- 3. HOW:** Students can ask Jesus for help with their doubts, and they can reaffirm areas of faith where they confidently believe.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Mark 9:14-29

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

John 20:24-29 and Philippians 4:8

TEACHING PREP

**LEADER
TIP**

Use this short overview to prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your group, you'll want to absorb it as you prepare to lead.

Read Mark 9:14-29.

Clearly, the father in this passage wanted his son to be freed from the evil spirit that was trying to kill him. This problem had been going on for a long time. You can imagine that the father was desperate and had likely followed every piece of advice people had given him. When Jesus came around, this father went to him because he had already asked Jesus' disciples for help but there was no change in the boy.

The father was probably exhausted and frustrated. When he came to Jesus he said, "Help us, if you can." Part of him had hope that Jesus could help, but another part of him wasn't sure *anyone* could help. Jesus called him out on his unbelief—and the man told him that he believed, but asked for help in his unbelief.

It's not wrong to have doubts. When we have doubts, we can go to Jesus with them. We can ask for his help. We can look at truth. We can listen to what he says. Jesus wants to help us. He wants to heal us. He wants to walk through our doubt with us.

Philippians 4 tells us that we need to focus on things that are good and noble and trustworthy. If we focus exclusively on our doubt, we may struggle to see truth. When we do see truth, we need to listen to it. Basing our faith just on feelings will not get us very far. It will hinder us along the way.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

TEXTS OR TWEETS

Send one or both of these messages to your students prior to your meeting. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- Do you have any doubts about God? Come to group tonight and let's explore how we can handle doubt well!
- Do you need Jesus' help to overcome your doubts? We want to journey with you. Let's talk about it this week!

PARENT EMAIL

Send this email to parents following the lesson to encourage them to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

We are continuing our "Staying Free" series, and this week we tackled the topic of doubt. We all struggle with it. When it comes to our faith, it is not wrong to have doubt, but we need to discover ways to appropriately deal with our doubts.

Mark 9 tells us about one man's doubt and unbelief—a man whose son had an evil spirit that tormented him, and nothing the man had done for his son had helped. He went to Jesus with a small glimmer of hope, but he still had some doubts. Jesus told him to believe, and the man said he did but asked for help with his unbelief.

Keep the conversation going at home this week. Here are some questions you might want to ask:

- When have you felt like you both believed and doubted at the same time, just like the father in Mark 9?
- Why do many people struggle to believe in Jesus or believe that the Bible is true?
- How do you deal with your own doubts?
- What is one way we can journey together when we have doubts in our faith?

Have a great week!

LESSON 2: HANDLING YOUR DOUBTS**2. LESSON GUIDE****GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]**

Have each of your leaders write down on a notecard something about themselves that the group would not know—something outlandish that they have done, something that would surprise your students, and so on. Shuffle the stack of notecards—this will ensure that many leaders won't actually read the card they wrote. If you use this lesson in a large-group setting, prep your leaders to read their cards. If you use this lesson in a smaller setting, simply tell students that you're going to read statements that some of the other leaders have written.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then lead students in this opening activity.

Bring your leaders to the front of the room and play Believe It or Doubt It. One leader will read the first card and try to convince the students that he or she wrote the card. They can even take a few questions from the group. Students will then shout “Believe it” or “Doubt it” after the leader reads the card—do they believe or doubt that this person wrote that card? Then the person who actually wrote the card steps forward—or the reader admits that he or she wrote it. Then the next leader will read the next card, and so on.

In a smaller setting, you can simply read each card and the name of a leader, and then give students the opportunity to respond. Regardless of the setting, consider having students stand up when they commit to an answer—that way there is no doubt that they have chosen their specific answer.

ASK:

- *Which statements surprised you most, and why?*
- *Were you surprised by how well some of the people “lied” when they were reading someone else’s card? Why or why not?*
- *What caused you to doubt some of the answers that turned out to be true?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Plenty of things in life can cause us to doubt. In this game, each of our leaders tried to convince you that the story was his or hers. You doubted some of them, and you believed others. When it comes to living a life of freedom in Jesus, belief and doubt are important topics.*

TEACHING POINTS



Use the Teaching Points to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Mark 9:14-29 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so several people have a chance to read.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Let's spend a few minutes exploring this unique passage of Scripture. Parts of the story are difficult for most people to imagine, but the core of the man's struggle with belief is something we all face.*

1. "I DO BELIEVE"

ASK:

- Tell us three specific things you believe—and why you believe them.
- Does genuine belief always lead to action? Why or why not?
- What's the connection between belief and faith and trust?
- In verse 22, the father uses the phrase "if you can" when asking Jesus to heal his son. Does this phrase reveal belief or doubt? Explain.
- Look at verse 29—how has prayer helped you believe in Jesus more confidently?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *This father did a powerful, amazing thing: He acknowledged that he did believe—even if he had doubts. Clearly, he wanted his son to be freed from the evil spirit that was trying to kill him. You can imagine that the father was desperate and had likely followed every piece of advice people had given him. When Jesus came around, this father went to him because he had already asked Jesus' disciples for help but there was no change in the boy. He had heard incredible things about Jesus, and he believed that Jesus could heal his son.*

2. "HELP ME..."

ASK:

- When do you find it most difficult to ask another person for help?
- Asking for help is a step of humility—how does humility guide you back to the path of freedom if you've made mistakes?
- Talk about a specific time Jesus helped you. What was that like?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Notice that the father didn't just ask Jesus to heal his son—he also asked Jesus to help him overcome his unbelief and doubt. Declaring our need for help can be tough. It means admitting that we don't have it all together. It requires humility. But true humility draws us closer to Jesus—it allows us to experience freedom and return to the path of freedom when we mess up. Asking for help is one of the most incredible, most powerful things you can do in life.*

3. "...OVERCOME MY UNBELIEF"

ASK:

- Verse 24 is a fascinating verse—the boy’s father says he believes but then asks Jesus to help him overcome his unbelief. When has that been your experience—you felt like you both believed and doubted at the same time?
- Why do many people struggle to believe in Jesus or believe that the Bible is true?
- What parts of the Bible are hard for you to believe are true?
- Tell us about a time that you had doubts about your faith—maybe a time in the past, or maybe a doubt you’re facing right now. What was or is that struggle like?
- How did Jesus help you overcome your doubts—or how do you see that happening, if it’s a current struggle?
- What do you typically do when you begin to doubt that Jesus is there for you and with you?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *It’s not wrong to have doubts. When we have doubts, we can go to Jesus with them. We can ask for his help. We can look at truth. We can listen to what he says. He wants to help us. He wants to heal us. Along the journey to freedom, Jesus wants to walk through our doubt with us.*

EXTRA DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask students to form groups of two or three to discuss these questions.



ASK:

- Read John 20:24-29. Did Thomas express healthy or unhealthy doubt in this passage? Explain.
- Read Philippians 4:8—this verse tells us to fix our thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. How can doing help you when you are struggling with doubt?

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

LIVING IT OUT

ASK:

- Where do you need help from Jesus today?
- What doubt (or doubts) can you take to Jesus this week?
- If you doubt that God is real, what can you do to test your doubt?
- What would it look like to replace doubt with truth?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *If you are struggling to hold on to the truths that you may have believed strongly in the past, talk with Jesus about it. We are going to spend some time telling Jesus about our doubts, and I want you to sit and listen. See if Jesus has something to tell you. Ask him to help you with your unbelief.*

Ask students to each find a quiet spot for a few minutes of prayer and reflection. Consider praying together as a group or asking if any students would like prayer from the rest of the group.

SUMMARY



LEADER
TIP

Provide a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) this lesson's content, (2) the dialogue that took place today, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the Scripture below.

"I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24).