

How do we live a powerful Christian life?

How do we actually face problems in life that require real supernatural results?

The disciples encountered such a situation.

Matthew 17:14-21 And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, ¹⁵ “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶ So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.”

¹⁷ Then Jesus answered and said, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.” ¹⁸ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?”

²⁰ So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. ²¹ However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

So what is happening here?

- A man presents an epileptic, demon-possessed son to the disciples. This is a problem that requires supernatural power for anything to happen.
- The disciples could not do what needed to be done. Why?
 - According to the text, they had a lack of faith.
 - Vs. 20 - So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

In fact, this passage appears to be primarily about faith, and is often used in lessons about faith. But let’s look a little closer at it.

Why could the disciples not cast out the demon?

Jesus' response – faithless and perverse generation.

Faithless – apistos – unbeliever

- Actually a word usually translated as unbeliever. Or without Christian faith. Heathen.
- This is a form of the word for apostasy
- Essentially Jesus is saying there is a disconnect from God. Or that the disciples are not connected to God.

Perverse - diastrephō - Corrupt, perverse.

- **Philippians 2:15** that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,
- Perverse meaning something not of God, but of that which is corruptible and perishing. The world.
- Essentially Jesus is saying they are connected to the world.

So the disciples are trying to operate in the supernatural power of God, but they are disconnected from God and connected to the world.

James 4:3-4 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. ⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Matthew 6:24 No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

- We cannot expect to move in the power and authority of Christ when we are not connected to Him.
- The world, the culture of the world, and the Kingdom of God – the culture of Heaven – are opposites. You cannot be of the world and of the Kingdom of God at the same time.
- Faith and the natural are always at odds with each other
- **2 Corinthians 5:7** For we walk by faith, not by sight.

John 15:5-7 “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

- When we are abiding in Him, we bear fruit, and much is accomplished. Apart from Him, nothing is accomplished, at least nothing eternal.

What was Jesus’ solution to the disciples problem?

First He talks about the power of faith. He says their unbelief prevented them from casting it out. And with great faith, you can move mountains.

But then He says something else.

This kind comes out only by prayer and fasting.

Did Jesus pray and fast before rebuking the demon? No. What is He talking about?

2 possibilities.

1. In the moment it is too late to be praying and fasting, so this needs to be a lifestyle.
2. Perhaps He was not referring to the demon, but to the disciples unbelief.

Either way, the point is the same – Prayer and fasting is the solution to the disconnect from God and the Connection to the world.

Prayer is connection with God.

- **Matthew 6:5-8** “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶ But you, when you pray, **go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father** who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. ⁷ And when you pray, **do not use vain repetitions** as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ “Therefore do not be like them. For **your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.**

Fasting is denying our flesh – disconnecting from the world.