

## SERMON STUDY GUIDE

# FAITH & DOUBT

### WEEK 1: FAITH & DOUBT JAN 8-14, 2023

God of new beginnings,  
thank you for your  
presence when we are  
challenged to grow in  
our spiritual lives,  
particularly in times of  
doubt. Help us to view  
them "friends" of faith.  
Amen

### THE BELIEVING SIDE OF FAITH

#### READ Mark 9: 17-24

14 When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. 15 As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet them.

16 "What are you arguing with them about?" he asked.

17 A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. 18 Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."

19 "You unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

20 So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

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

"From childhood," he answered. 22 "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

23 "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes."

24 Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."

26 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.

28 After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

29 He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."

### GETTING STARTED

- Welcome each other.
- Inquire as to anyone who is missing. Is follow-up needed?
- What was your first reaction to the title of this sermon series?



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## SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How do you react to the idea of faith AND doubt. Can these two co-exist? If so, how? If not, why not?
- If you can, share a time of profound doubt in your life journey. What was/is it like? Was/Is God or faith part of your experience with doubt? Compare it to a time when God just felt "far away."
- Did you find it helpful to hear the doubts and questions some people sent to Pastor Rob?
- This sermon was peppered with rhetorical questions. Let us imagine a conversation with Pastor Rob and respond to some of them:
  - Why do you come to church? What do you hope it will do for you? What story do you think God would write about you as a result of your spiritual engagement? (No guilt here.)
  - Do you remember the first time you had your doubts about stories of faith, e.g., "Bible Stories"? Or faith itself? Or God? How old were you? Do you remember what your questions or doubts were? Was it acceptable to ask your questions? If not, why not? And if so, what happened?
  - Have you ever become discouraged by your doubts? Have you ever felt something is wrong with you because of your doubt? As if you might be losing your faith?
  - Is there a belief or idea about God that you find a challenge to your spiritual growth?
  - Do you have big doubts today that you find unsettling? What questions might your doubts be prompting you to ask? Have your doubts come to bring you to a new level of searching? Are your doubts inviting you to consider new understandings of God?
- What is the most relevant point of the Scripture passage from the Gospel of Mark about Jesus and a father whose son suffered from what we would now think of as epilepsy?
- Reflect on the title of the sermon, "The Believing Side of Faith." What does it mean to you?
- This sermon is rich in insights and challenges. Do your best to identify two or three takeaways that you will remember throughout the coming weeks. Hang on to these takeaways, as they will form the basis for the next three sermons in this series.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

