First Baptist Friendswood Students

Daily Discipleship — October 18-23

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18TH

CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus showed His authority over the demonic spirit that tormented the Gentile girl, but this miracle only pointed to the truth that all evil will one day be defeated with Jesus's second coming at the end of the age. Believers can walk in hope, trusting by faith that this victory will come.

OUTSIDERS NO MORE — MARK 7

JESUS BRINGS US OUT OF DARKNESS — MARK 7:24-30

24 And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. 25 But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. 26 Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophoenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 And he said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." 28 But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." 29 And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." 30 And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

JESUS HEALS US — MARK 7:31-37

31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. 34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." 35 And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

THEOLOGY CONNECTION — NEW IDENTITY OF THE BELIEVER

When we place faith in Jesus, we go through a change of identity—from being enemies under God's wrath to members of God's family as beloved children (Eph. 2:19). Believers are declared righteous on account of Jesus's perfect life and substitutionary death and resurrection. No longer are believers slaves to sin, defined by past failures or present struggles. Believers are delivered from the realm of darkness and belong to the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). Anyone who is in Jesus is a "new creation"; the old, sinful self is passed away and the new, redeemed self is alive, becoming more and more like Him (2 Cor. 5:17).

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

JESUS BRINGS US OUT OF DARKNESS — MARK 7:24-30

• How do you think the woman felt as she approached Jesus? What stops us from going to Him like this?

• How do Jesus's words make you feel (v. 27)? Why did He respond like this?

• Who are the outsiders in our culture? In your life? As believers, what is our role in helping them leave darkness?

JESUS HEALS US — MARK 7:31-37

• What stands out about how Jesus healed the deaf man? How should this shape our heart for others?

• How does this passage give us hope when so much brokenness surrounds us?

• What are ways you need Jesus's healing today?

What need or struggle have you been afraid to bring to Jesus? How can you take steps to surrender it?

LIFE CONNECTION

Labels are everywhere: labels that situate each of us into certain groups; labels that say we belong in some places but not others; labels of approval and disapproval. Most of us are just struggling to fit somewhere. We don't want to stand out, but we don't want to blend in either. At the heart of this struggle is a surprising truth: God created us with a desire to belong. The very fact that we are created beings means we belong to someone, right? We try so hard to find acceptance here. The issue though? We weren't created to root our sense of belonging in anyone but God. Do you ever wonder, "Does Jesus actually see me, and if He does, am I actually welcome?" And the loudest, most incredible answer is "Yes!" Sure, God desires each of us to have community here with people to encourage us and walk with us. But the labels, the striving to belong, the disappointment when we don't—we can let all of that go. The only label that will ever matter is that you're God's child, deeply loved and wholly accepted.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 19TH — 1 PETER 2:9-10

If you had to choose to live in total darkness all of the time or total light all of the time, which would you choose? Most of us would choose the light. We need light to see, and though darkness is great when we're sleeping, we don't necessarily want to live in darkness.

The truth is that we were all born children in darkness because of the fall that took place in Eden. We are saved by grace through faith, and the moment that we believe and confess that Jesus is the Son of God and trust in His work on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, something miraculous happens; our spiritual citizenship is transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. Peter explained that while we were formerly not people of God, "now [we] are God's people." We are not simply "made better," but we are given a completely new identity as children of God and citizens of heaven. This changes our lives in every single way. We no longer have to hope in the things of this world, but we can find our hope in the promises of God! The way we walk changes. No longer do we only walk in the confidence that comes from what we can do, but we can walk in confidence that comes from who our Father is and what Jesus has done. The way we talk changes. No longer are we only representing ourselves, but when we become children of light, we become representatives of God here on earth. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can use our words to reflect Christ to the world. The way we think about the future changes. The way we see and love other people changes. When we walked in darkness, we had no choice but to look like the world. When we were called into light, everything changed, and we began transforming to be like Christ!

• How would you describe "living in darkness" compared to "living in the light"?

• We can struggle to live in light—in our new identity. What can you do when you're tempted to conform to the world instead of walking as a child of God?

PRAY

God, thank You for loving me so much that You didn't leave me the same. Help me to remember daily that because You called me out of darkness and into light, I can walk in freedom from the things of this world.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20TH — ROMANS 10:11-13

In the lesson this week, we read about a non-Jewish woman who begged Jesus to heal her daughter. Prior to Jesus's ministry, non-Jewish people, or Gentiles, could enjoy some of God's covenant blessings if they lived by faith according to God's laws, but this was not the norm. Gentiles weren't part of God's chosen nation, Israel. Jesus came and fulfilled God's promise not only to offer salvation to the Jews but also to extend the invitation of salvation to the world! Paul wrote that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Jesus's life, death, and resurrection made a way for all people to be called children of God, not just the nation of Israel. God wants all people to know Him. He actually desires that so much that He sent His only Son to the cross to make a way for everyone to be brought into His family. This is good news, not only for those who don't know Jesus but also for believers with family and friends who don't know the love of Christ. While we are called to love non-believers, this love can often come with great sadness and heartache. We want them to share in the hope we have in Christ. However, we can take comfort in knowing that God also wants our friends and family members to know Him, more than we could ever want that for them! This truth should change the way we interact with others. Every person is someone for whom Jesus died. Each person we interact with is either someone who has been saved or who God desires to save. This should motivate us to share God's love and the message of the gospel with people we encounter. Since Jesus died for all people, we must treat every person as someone worth sharing the gospel.

• How does the truth that God desires for all people to know Him encourage you?

• Jesus died for all people, which means that every person is worth sharing the good news with. How does this challenge you?

PRAY

Jesus, thank You for making a way for all people to know You. Help me to share the life-changing story of Your love with those around me out of gratitude for what You have done.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21ST — MATTHEW 15:21-28

In this passage, after the woman asked Jesus for help, He was silent. Let's imagine how the woman felt in this moment. She was desperate for her daughter's healing, and she asked the only person capable for that healing. As she waited for a response, we can imagine that she was filled with questions: "Does Jesus care? Will He help me? Is what I've heard about Him true? If He doesn't help, what will happen?"

The questions that may have filled her head in that moment are questions some of us have asked as well. In times when we don't understand what God is doing and we cannot physically see evidence of His work, we can feel like God is silent or distant. But just like the "silence" we may experience, Jesus's silence toward the woman was not unloving; His silence served a purpose. Jesus set up a teaching moment for those witnessing the event. The disciples filled the silence and suggested that Jesus send her away. Jesus's response created an opportunity for a dialogue between Him and the woman, in which she humbly acknowledged her status as a Gentile and begged for the leftover scraps of Jesus's blessings. In other words, this woman recognized Jesus's worth, and she recognized her own unworthiness in comparison. Jesus immediately healed the woman's daughter because of her great faith. Let's not miss the lesson that Jesus taught His disciples in this moment. Previously, God's blessing was only for the nation of Israel, but here we see that His blessings were extended to even non-Jews who declared faith in Him! In His silence and in repeating what His disciples were likely thinking, Jesus revealed their lack of compassion and corrected them, helping them learn that God's love is for all people.

• Does God's silence mean He isn't working in a situation? Why or why not?

• Look back at a time when you felt God was silent. What lesson did He teach you?

PRAY

Lord, thank You for being a God who promises to never leave nor forsake His children. Help me to remember that You are always with me and always working, even when I can't see it.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22ND — PSALM 13

Have you ever been in desperate need of an answer? Maybe you had no clue what the answer was to a question on a test. Or maybe you needed an answer with a difficult decision. In this psalm, David expressed longing for God to answer him. He felt as though God had hidden His face and left him to find help elsewhere. Notice that this prayer of David's is not light and optimistic at first. His words are raw, and his feelings are unfiltered. He is transparent and unafraid to bring his feelings and questions before God.

Oftentimes, we can feel like bringing our feelings before God in this way is unacceptable, but the Lord created us with intention, as complex beings with all types of feelings and the ability to ask questions. Our heavenly Father never intended for us to wait to come to Him when our thoughts are aligned with His, when our feelings can be tied up and packaged into a beautiful box, or when we have everything figured out. Our God is a loving God, and He desires for us to bring our doubts, emotions, and questions to Him at times when He feels near and at times when He feels distant. The end of this psalm reminds us that even when God feels silent, we have a reason to rejoice. Scripture teaches us that God's character remains the same even in times of trouble. God cannot forsake Himself. He is faithful and loving. He is a good and compassionate Father. Nothing can change those truths about God. When it feels like God isn't speaking, run to Him. Lay your worries before Him and trust that He is still faithful and good. In difficult moments, like David, let's remember who God is and the hope we have in Him.

• David honestly brings his feelings before God instead of hiding them. What emotions or questions do you struggle to bring to God? What holds you back from being transparent with Him?

• How can focusing on God's unchanging character help you trust Him, even when your circumstances remain difficult and you feel like God is silent?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for being a God who listens. You never change, and You promise to never abandon Your children. Help me remember and trust Your character when I walk through the valleys of life.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23RD — ISAIAH 35:5-6

In the main passage this week, Jesus performed one of His many miraculous signs, in which He restored the ability to hear and speak to a man who was deaf and mute. At first glance, this may seem like another amazing act of compassion. While the healing that took place was life-changing for the man who received it, this event carried more significance than the healing alone. This miracle directly fulfilled prophecy recorded centuries earlier in the book of Isaiah, when God promised that the coming Messiah would unstop the ears of the deaf and make the mute's tongue shout for joy. With this miracle, Jesus not only healed the man's physical body but also revealed His true identity as the long-awaited Messiah according to the Scriptures. This truth should increase our faith! Our faith in God isn't blind; it's proven repeatedly by the consistent faithfulness of God and the countless examples in Scripture of God doing exactly what He said He would. In fact, during His thirty-three years on earth, Jesus fulfilled over 350 prophecies with His life, death, and resurrection, many of which were completely outside of human control. Because we can see that Jesus has faithfully fulfilled God's promises in the past, we can have hope for the future and confidently trust that He will bring all of God's promises to pass. Reading about all of the prophesies that have come to pass and have been recorded should remind us that God's faithfulness is unending, He is always at work, and His Word will never fail.

• How does this story in Scripture increase your faith in Jesus as the one true Savior?

• How does focusing on promises God has already fulfilled shape your trust in Him as you wait on unanswered prayers and His other promises?

PRAY

Lord, thank You for giving us Your Word to show us Your unfailing faithfulness. When I doubt, help me to look at what You've already done so that I can wait with confidence on Your other promises.