

START

Take a moment, go around the circle and introduce yourself. Each person needs to answer this question:

When you were a kid, what did you want to become when you grew up and why?

SHARE

Let's be honest, we have all prayed for certain things to happen in our lives and sometimes we feel that God never heard our prayer. We ask questions like, "Did I not have enough faith?" or "Am I not deserving of getting my prayer answered?" This leads to us doubting our faith, doubting God and for some to walk away from the faith altogether. What if God has a reason, purpose, and a plan for our lives? We just may not see it in the moment. Let's read a story about a father who brings his suffering boy and his doubts to Jesus:

Jesus Responds // Mark 9:21-26

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. "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." "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes."

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

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." The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

How can you identify with the father, having enough faith to bring something to Jesus, but still struggling with doubts?

What does this say about God in this story? Jesus answered his prayer even amidst his imperfect faith.

How do you personally react when prayers seem to go unanswered in your life?

GROW

Throughout the message, we learned that we don't have to have perfect faith to see God answer our prayers. We don't have to prove to God that we are somehow deserving of a miracle, since we have all fallen short of God's standard. It is not God who moves away from us, but we can move away from him. The people of Israel often acted like they knew what God was thinking and that they knew best, but God speaks to them. Let's read all of Isaiah 55 and then talk about the key verses:

God's Ways // Isaiah 55:8-9

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

"Four reasons are given for seeking the Lord. (1) Man's thoughts and ways are not those of God. Man therefore cannot evaluate his own spiritual condition nor can he dictate the terms of his acceptance before the Lord (55:8f.). (2) As moisture accomplishes its purpose in the physical realm, so the word of God will fulfill God's purpose in the hearts of those who humble themselves before him (55:10f.). (3) Those who answer God's invitation "will go out with joy," they will be "led forth with peace." Freedom awaits those who reject sin and embrace the Lord. Even nature is depicted celebrating the redemption of man. Happiness and contentment ("cypress" and "myrtle") replace bitterness and sorrow ("thorn bush" and "nettle") in the lives of obedient believers. These transformed lives would be an everlasting testimony to the power and compassion of the Lord (55:12f.). " (Old Testament Survey Series)

How do we try to fit God into our own mold in this culture? Do you find it difficult to let him mold you and why?

After reading Isaiah 55, were there any verses that spoke to you and why?

MOVE

God desires for us to seek him, to trust him that his ways are higher than our ways and that God truly knows you better than you know yourself. We don't control God's hand, but we can trust his hand even when things are difficult. Let's return to the key verse that the Seven14 Series has been based on:

Seeking the Lord // 2 Chronicles 7:14

...If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Do you tend to seek the Lord to spend time with him or to just seek his hand to do something for you?

How have you felt around people who don't want to get to know you, but just want to get something from you?

What specifically do you need to trust God with this week?

PRAY

Let's put into practice what we have been learning by praying for each other. Before we pray for each other, let's remember that God desires to change us in the middle of our circumstances. Trust that this week.

Prayer is less about changing our circumstances and more about changing us.

– Mark Batterson