

# Small Groups Curriculum

## Week of April 11, 2021

### **OPENING PRAYER**

Shine in our hearts, O Master Who loves mankind, the pure light of Your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our mind that we may comprehend the proclamations of Your Gospels. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments so that, having trampled down all carnal desires, we may lead a spiritual life, both thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the illumination of our souls and bodies, and to You we offer up glory, together with Your Father, Who is without beginning, and Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Prayer Before the Reading of the Gospel  
Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom

### **THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS**

For Sunday of Saint John Climacus

#### **SUNDAY EPISTLE**

**St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 6:13-20**

#### **SUNDAY GOSPEL**

**The Gospel According to Mark 9:17-31**

All readings are available at [goarch.org](http://goarch.org) or the Daily Readings app.

## **EPISTLE READING**

Brethren, when God made a promise to Abraham, since He had no one greater by whom to swear, He swore to himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise.

Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, He interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us.

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

## **GOSPEL READING**

At that time, a man came to Jesus kneeling and saying: "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; and wherever it seizes him it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able."

And He answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to him; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth.

And Jesus asked his father, "How long has he had this?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"

And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And He said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting." They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And He would not have any one know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise."

# Discussion

## INTRO NOTES

### 1. Trust In God

- A. In the Gospel, Jesus expressed disappointment with His disciples, who were unable to cast out a demon
  - i. He calls them a “faithless generation”
  - ii. They placed their trust in their own strength, rather than God
- B. In the Epistle, Saint Paul expresses confidence in who God is
  - i. We can place our trust in God because “it is impossible that God should prove false”
- C. Our trust should be in God, not anywhere else

### 2. The Nature of Faith

- A. In the Gospel, the disciples seemed certain that they could cast out the demon
  - i. When they were away from the crowd, “His disciples asked him privately, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’”
- B. In the Epistle, Saint Paul describes faith in mysterious terms, as “behind the curtain”
  - i. Yet we can be confident in “the unchangeable character of His purpose”
  - ii. We can be confident even if we are not certain
- C. Faith is about far more than belief; it’s about our trust in God

### 3. Opportunities for Faith

- A. In the Gospel, a father Jesus with doubts
  - i. “I believe; help my unbelief!”
  - ii. His doubt became an opportunity for faith, to trust in God even when he wasn’t certain
  - iii. The father confessed his uncertainty publicly, while the disciples went to Jesus in private to ask why they couldn’t cast out the demon
- B. Similarly, Saint Paul points to the “patient endurance” of Abraham
  - i. Faith involves trust in difficult moments
  - ii. We need to be patient for God to act in His time, not our time
- C. Challenges are not obstacles to faith, but rather opportunities for faith and faithfulness

For more on this Sunday’s Scripture readings, watch:

[Live the Word #26 I Do You Struggle With Your Faith?](#)

# Discussion

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How are you feeling right now?
2. When have you put your faith in yourself rather than God? What makes it easier to trust in yourself than God?
3. How do you see faith? Do you tend to talk about it in abstract terms, like “belief?” Or organizational terms, like “participation?” Or do you see it as trust and faithfulness in God? What would it look like to begin seeing it in terms of faithfulness rather than mere belief?
4. Have you ever had opportunities for faith like Abraham? Have you experienced challenging moments that called you out of everything that felt familiar and tested your faith? How did you respond?

If you don't get through all the questions, that's ok!

# Discussion

## **WRAP-UP NOTES**

Each Wrap-Up should be personal and based on your time together as a Small Group. These three questions can help you, as a Small Group Leader, wrap up your weekly meeting:

1. What are you grateful to have learned or heard in the conversation?
2. What simple statement or question from the conversation can you share again that would be most helpful to hear again three years from now?
3. If you could share up to twelve words on the topic of “faith” what would you say?

## **AT THE END OF MEETINGS**

We give thanks to You, invisible King, Who by Your boundless power fashioned the universe, and in the multitude of Your mercy brought all things from nothing into being. Look down from heaven, O Master, upon those who have bowed their heads before You; for they have not bowed before flesh and blood, but before You, the awesome God. Therefore, O Master, make smooth and beneficial for us all, whatever lies ahead, according to the need of each: Sail with those who sail; travel with those who travel; heal the sick, Physician of our souls and bodies. Through the grace, compassion, and love for mankind of Your only-begotten Son, with whom You are blessed, together with Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Prayer Following the Lord's Prayer  
Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom