



Is it possible to be beyond the reach of God? There seems to be an all too common feeling of hurt or guilt or separation that runs so deep and is so all encompassing that those who carry these burdens can't fathom how God could or would ever want to get close to them. This thinking seems to be the result of projecting onto God what we feel inside ourselves or from those around us. If we perceive that others find ample reasons to dislike us or that we ourselves can't stand who or what we are, then we assume God must hold the same opinion. It might even be that we carry the weight of that "unbelievable" thing we did. *Given who God is, how could God possibly love me?*

*"Given who God is"* is actually our best hope. God is the one who sent Jesus into the world, so that we would believe in him and thereby find our way off the roads leading to death and onto the path leading to life. Jesus was God with us—God in the flesh, and he didn't come into the world to condemn us but to save us. He came to share good news with poor people and help blind people see. He came to bless the not so strong and the bullied and to spend time with kids. He came specifically for sinners, saving most of his harshest words instead for the people who kept bragging that they were doing everything *right*.

You might feel like you have reason to believe that you're beyond the love of Jesus, but beware, Jesus is relentless. The demon-possessed man, the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years, and Jairus, his wife, and his daughter (Luke 8:26-56) are examples of how far the love of Christ can reach. Each of them had his or her sense of resignation, profound need, or personal uncleanness, but the kingdom which Jesus proclaims is committed to recovering desperate people from their desperate situations. Healing may come in a day or on *the day* of his return, but healing will come. It's the way of the One who sends out his power to desperate people who desperately hunger for his love.

### **Personal Reflection and Application**

*Keep a journal to address the following questions and topics.*

**Q** Read the story of the demon-possessed man (Luke 8:26-39). In what ways do you identify with this man before his healing? In what ways do you identify with him after his encounter with Christ? In what ways do you identify with the towns people (vs. 37)?

**Q** Read the story of the woman who reached out to Jesus (8:42-48). Assess your own sense of desperation for Jesus. What do you want him to accomplish in your life? How long are you willing to wait? What, if anything, serves as "the crowd" that makes access to Christ difficult for you?

**Q** Read the story of Jairus' daughter (8:40-42, 49-56). If you were to ask God for the seemingly impossible, what would it be? How do you think he would respond? To what degree are you willing to trust him?

**AC** Attempt this week to be aware of the deep needs of people you come across.

**P** *Rescue me, Jesus.*



**Small Groups**

Opening Question: In a crisis, do you tend to be the one who likes to rescue, be rescued, watch the rescuing, outsource the rescuing, or remain oblivious to the need for rescue? An example?

**AC** Read Luke 8:26-56. Make a list of the main characters, noting the need they each had, the approach to Jesus they each took, how Jesus responded to each of them, and the change his response made in each of their lives.

- What similarities and differences exist between the three stories?
- Who seems to be the most worthy and the least worthy of Jesus' healing?
- What stands out to you in each of the stories?
- How do the stories compare to your experience of Christianity?
- What form of rescue can we expect from Christ?

**AC** What do the following passages reveal about the possibility of rescue in the kingdom of God: Matthew 7:7-11; 18:19; 21:21-22; John 14:12-14; 15:7-8, 16; 16:19-24; James 1:5-8; 4:1-4; 5:7-18; 1 John 3:21-22; 5:14-15. How is God answering your prayers for "healing"? Should we expect him to answer? Consider praying to God on behalf of each other. Respect each other by not offering trite quips in response to deep angst.

**One on One Relationships**

Some people overestimate their needs while others overestimate their lack of need. This week's passage gives you and your disciple an opportunity to explore how much you feel the need for God to rescue you.

You might consider going through each of the three stories in Luke 8:26-56, specifically noting the need that the demon-possessed man, the hemorrhaging woman, and Jairus' daughter exhibited. How do their needs relate to yours—in severity, scope, pain, duration, impact on relationships, relative impossibility, etc.

It might be that your disciple already has a fairly good understanding of his or her needs before God, but struggles with why God doesn't answer her or his prayers. If this is the case, consider examining the passage again. This time note how many people there might have been in the three locations who did not receive the kind of rescue highlighted in each story.

The Bible presents both the promise of struggle and the promise of freedom. Talk with your disciple about his or her sense of freedom and struggle. Commit to praying for each other's "rescue" and for each other's ability to wait on God.

**Families**

*Pick and tweak items below to fit your own family's context.*

**AC** All week long, play *rescue* with your family. Feel free to include make-believe ambulances and fire trucks. Run from one end of the house to the other to provide "assistance" to the person "in need." Throughout the week, point out the fact that Jesus rescues us so that we can enjoy the love of God.

**AC** Read Luke 8:26-56 together as a family. Give each person a sheet of paper. Ask everyone to write in the middle of the sheet the prayer they most want God to answer in their lives. Have everyone crinkle up their paper into a little ball and then wrap it in tape. Everyone should try to keep their "prayer ball" with them all week long—carrying it in a pocket during the day and placing it under the pillow at night. Lift up the concern to God throughout the week. Challenge everyone to entrust their prayer with someone else who could pray with them. At the end of the week, without requiring people to divulge their request, have an open discussion about God's promise to provide for us and our experience of his provision.

**P** *Hear our prayers, Father.*