



SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

HOW NOT TO BE SECULAR - WEEK I



ALL SAINTS

“I DON’T BELIEVE IN GOD, BUT I MISS HIM”

ALL SAINTS

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA | AUSTIN

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PRAYERS	DISCUSSION
<p><u>CONNECTION:</u></p> <p>Men’s Retreat February 20-21st at T Bar M in New Braunfels. Speaker is Aaron Jeffrey. Early registration deadline is January 15th. Sign up at allsaintsaustin.org/men.</p> <p>Cross & Culture 2015 February 6-7th with guest speaker David Taylor and visiting artist Sandra Bowden. This event will examine and celebrate the vital role that the visual arts play in culture and the Christian life. Tickets are \$15 (\$10 for students). allsaintsaustin.org/cc.</p> <p>Young Adult Retreat March 14-15th, 2015 with PCA churches from Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. Glenn Hoburg of Grace PCA in Washington DC will be our speaker. Cost is \$75 if register before January 23rd. Sign up www.allsaintsaustin.org/young-adults-ministry.</p> <p><u>REQUESTS:</u></p> <p>Dealing with Doubt What difficulties are in your life right now that give rise to doubt about God’s character? Who in your life is struggling with significant doubts for whom we can pray?</p>	<p>INTRO <i>(Question:)</i> The Oxford Dictionary defines certainty as a “firm conviction that something is the case.” In light of that definition, of what in your life would you say you are certain? What role does certainty play in your daily decisions and activities? <i>(Transition:)</i> Certainty is a tricky thing. God is completely trustworthy, and we know him to be true. His character and being demand and engender certainty as defined by the Oxford Dictionary. But most people think of certainty as absolute, complete, and objective knowledge which transcends the possibility of being doubted. This knowledge is impossible for humans, which has led many to belief that truth cannot be known (a subject to discuss in depth at another time). What we should consider at the outset here is that we all are guided by our firm convictions about significant realities, and that our faith in God should rise to this level.</p> <p>We have begun a four-week series entitled “How Not To Be Secular.” We are discussing this topic because we acknowledge that our world has transitioned from a place in which belief in God was assumed to an age in which atheism or agnosticism is almost inescapable. Doubt is the default, but even those who do not believe in God have doubts about their doubts, and feel pressured with the memory of God. Most still long for transcendence and greatly fear death. They aren’t totally committed to secularism, and wonder, “What if I am wrong?” But we are all, even Christians, impacted by the pervasiveness of doubt. As we read our text be thinking about this question: “How do we live in a world where doubt is normal?”</p> <p>READ the text aloud.</p> <p>DISCUSS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let’s quickly identify the characters involved in this narrative. Whom do you notice and what are they each doing in this story? • What is the significance of that fact that this story occurs immediately after the Transfiguration—when Peter, James, and John see Jesus in all His glory, see Him talking to Moses and Elijah, and hear the voice of God from heaven? • What are the scribes and the crowd arguing about? What do you imagine are the positions of the scribes in the debate? In what ways are we, as Christians, prone to be like the scribes? • Put yourself in the shoes of the father in this account. What sorts of emotions would you be going through? What concerns and thoughts would run through your head? What actions do you imagine you would take? • What is most precious to you for which you would do anything to protect and nurture? Look at what happens when the father’s precious son is brought to Jesus in v. 26. How does this shape our understanding of how Jesus heals our precious? • In what ways is the father a picture of genuine faith? What does he mean by the statement, “I believe; help my unbelief”? • How does the story of this son anticipate future redemptive events of Christ’s life? <p>CONCLUDE The father, helpless but hopeful, brings his sick beloved son to Jesus. Jesus, who has compassion and capability to heal, seems to make things worse at first. But ultimately the boy is lifted up. This story anticipates the story of Christ, the beloved Son who was sent by His Father to be silent before His accusers, suffer afflictions, endure actual death, and be lifted up in resurrection so that we might be healed. We can be confident that God will provide for our precious, even though it might have to go through a similar trajectory.</p>

MARK 9:14-29

ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION (ESV)

[14] And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. [15] And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. [16] And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" [17] And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. [18] And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." [19] 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." [20] 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.

[21] And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. [22] And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." [23] And Jesus said to him, "'If you can! All things are possible for one who believes.'" [24] Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" [25] And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."

[26] 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." [27] But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. [28] And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" [29] And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."