

## **1. An Encounter with God Mark 9: 1-13**

Here we find Jesus along with Peter, James and John up on a high mountain. There, Jesus was transfigured -in other words, changed into another form- before them. We may wonder why he took only these three. Maybe only these three were ready. Mountains are often associated with drawing close to God. God had appeared to Moses and Elijah on mountains while they were on earth. On the mountain they heard God's voice saying, 'This is my Son, listen to him'! When Moses had gone up the mountain, he listened to God. Elijah, on the mountain, listened to God. But here, God was asking the three to listen to Jesus. He was the much awaited Messiah. We should have a mountain top experience just like Elijah, Moses or Jesus. What is a mountain top experience? It is taking a day off from work or college and spending 5-6 hours just with God (Breakfast, lunch included; cellphones and phone calls excluded). If you have mixed up priorities, it's time to have a mountain top experience with God. If you have let go of your first love, then you should have a mountain top experience with God. If you have lost the art of digging into the scriptures, then you must have a mountain top experience with God. You may ask why now? If not now, then when? Go ahead, make a plan in the coming weeks to have a mountain top encounter with God.

## **2. An Encounter with the Evil spirit Mark 9: 14-29**

A man had a son who was possessed by an evil spirit. The disciples had tried to drive it out, but they failed. When the boy was brought to Jesus, the impure spirit shook the boy violently and finally left him. We get some great insights to overcome evil spirits that ruin us.

- a) The man did not hide the fact that the boy was possessed – we should be open about our struggles
- b) The man sought help – we should seek help
- c) The man had to believe that the boy could be cured – we have to believe that change is possible
- d) The man was open about his unbelief – we should still seek God (pray) in our unbelief

How are you when you pray? How are you when you seek God? How desperate do you want to change? The desperation to change will be seen in our prayer. In other words a desperate man would be a begging man in front of God. Let us decide to not ignore the evil spirits in us. Do not feel guilty because – you are unable to change. Rather, believe that with Jesus, we can overcome any evil spirit.

## **3. An Encounter with Death Mark 9: 30-37**

Jesus moved ahead. He spoke about being a servant and welcoming little children (Both are important to be a leader in God's kingdom). While he was teaching his disciples he spoke about how he would be killed and that he will rise up after three days. It is interesting to note that Jesus was confident that he would be arrested, put to death but would defeat death on the third day. How confidently can you talk about your death? Many people do not like to talk about death. In fact, many don't like death. Where there is death there is sadness and people mourn. We still haven't figured out how to overcome death. We do not have a formula, a pill, an equation, a diet or a bank balance or a security deposit for death. Nobody is working on how to defeat death. The google stats show that, 105 people die every minute, 6316 people die every hour and 151,600 people die every day.

Almost 99% of these people have no idea that they had to be a committed true Christian to meet Jesus after death. Whether we like it or not we will have an encounter with death. An encounter that we cannot avoid, neglect or dodge. In fact according to Jesus, it is after death that our real life begins. Our life here on earth is so temporary. It's a preparation for the real journey after death. Jesus did say he would prepare many rooms if we are faithful to him. Let us decide (with room problems, cockroach problems, water problems, electricity problems, job problems, family problems, marriage problems or government problems) that we would run the race in such a way as to win the prize. So, when we encounter death, with Jesus we would arise.

#### **4. An Encounter with Counterpart Mark 9: 38-41**

Jesus' disciple John saw someone driving out demons. He supposedly asked that person to stop because he was not part of Jesus' group. This man was a counterpart of John. Jesus explains not to stop him and that whoever is not against him is for him. Jesus was not saying that being neutral or mediocre (lukewarm) towards him is the same as being committed (hot). He is clear elsewhere that if anybody is not with him then they are against him. In other words just being a traditional Christian would not do. Many times we come across people from Christian background who rarely read their Bibles and are not committed to follow the footsteps of Christ. We should realize that they are in fact not with Christ and we should lovingly usher them into the Kingdom of God. Telling people how great we are would not help, but sharing our lives and being humble would impress people to follow Jesus. As a disciple of Jesus we do not attend our old fellowship or traditional church. We can go to the open air meetings to invite people but not participate. Let us show the love of Christ and win our counterparts.

#### **5. An Encounter with Radicalness Mark 9: 42-50**

Here we see Jesus being hard lined with sin. Jesus asks us to cut our hand, cut our foot and pluck out our eyes if these are causing us to sin. What Jesus was demanding is to have a radical attitude towards sin. He was stating, 'lose everything if you have to, but make sure your soul is heavenly bound'. The reason some of us struggle with the same sin over and over again is

- a) We discuss only the headlines and not the details – hence the root remains
- b) Some of us have not stripped ourselves naked before God (Confessing our ugliest sin) thereby begging Jesus to cover our body with his righteousness
- c) Some of us hate people, hate food, hate attitude, hate challenges, hate rebukes, hate our discipler, hate church, hate corrections, hate parents, hate pain, hate denying ourselves, hate God (very scary) more than hating our sin. Stop this rubbish. You need to hate your sin more than anything else and then you can see the change in your life.

Discuss with your discipler about your pet sin. Go on a radical fast and make a firm decision to put God first and yourself last on the food chain.