

Theme: Who's ALMIGHTY?

Topic: God as Sovereign

Date:

Opening: Arrange ahead of time to have a couple artistic students bring in renderings of what they think God is like. They have no limits. They can use a collage, cut out pictures, or draw their own. We'll have them bring them in and let one other person each interpret their pictures. "What do you think this person feels about God?"

The point is that we see in people all the time, whether they draw a picture or not, what they feel about God. It's written all over their life. Last time together we started a series, "Who's Almighty?", talking about some of the attributes of God. And just like in the art illustration, we communicate to others what God's character is like.

Small Groups: Split up into small groups and answer these questions:

1. Share your name and answer this question: If you could experience any miracle from the Bible, which one would you like to see?
2. When your friends who are NOT followers of Christ look at your friends who say they ARE followers, what do you think they feel God is like as they see Him reflected in your Christian friends? Why?
3. Do you think there ARE less miracles today than in Biblical times, there SEEM TO BE less (though not less in reality), or they are the same?

Get some feedback on the few two questions.

Today we're continuing our series by talking about God as Almighty, All-powerful. While people may see through us that God is merciful (they see we're forgiven) or that He is loving (they see how we love others), how is it that they might see that God is all-powerful? What could they see in us that would lead them to that conclusion? Get some answers to those questions.

Here are various songs over the years that have dealt with "miracles". Check out the lyrics to these songs, then ask what they meant when they said "miracle". It's safe to say they weren't using the same concept of God-powered miracle as we find in the Bible. Here are a few examples:

- Pearl Jam, *I Believe in Miracles*
- Mariah Carey, *When You Believe*
- Matt White, *Miracles*
- Hot Chocolate, *I Believe in Miracles*

Or you may want to use a clip from the movie, *Miracle*, about the 1980 US Olympic hockey team's unlikely victory over the USSR. The famous announcer quote at the end of the game was, "Do you believe in miracles?!" The thought is that the U.S. team

beating Russia is a miracle.

The point is that when we are talking about miracles, we're not just talking about unlikely things happening. We're talking about God stepping in and doing something "impossible", not "unlikely".

Clearly, we know the God of the Bible worked in supernatural, miraculous, powerful ways. Yet, IF GOD REALLY IS A GOD WITH THIS KIND OF POWER, WHERE IS THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN HIM AND OUR LIVES TODAY? Most students have either asked, or been asked, this question: Why doesn't God work that way in our time? Why doesn't He do miracles anymore?

There are only a few options:

- God is not powerful like this any more.
- God is powerful, but doesn't want to get involved in our lives like He did in Biblical times.
- God is powerful, and does want to show His strength in our lives right now, but often doesn't for a variety of reasons.

We propose that option 3 is the truth. **Hebrews 13:8** tells us Jesus doesn't change. God hasn't changed the way He does things. Yet, for a number of reasons in most of our experiences, God doesn't seem to do the miraculous to the level He used to. Why?

Reasons for which God seems to withhold His power:

1. Lack of belief

Read **Mark 6:1-6**. Here are a couple teaching points from this story:

What does "could do no miracle there except..." mean (v. 5)? Was he unable? Does our lack of belief restrain an Almighty God? Matthew (13:58) tells this same story but says Jesus "did not do many miracles there". In some mysterious way, our lack of belief is a condition in which God removes His miraculous power.

What a remarkable statement, that Jesus "wondered at their unbelief" (v. 6). Very few things in Scripture caused Jesus to wonder, but our unbelief is one of them. Though God is All-powerful, we treat Him like He is only slightly stronger than us. Do we really believe? Look at the contrast between this situation and the man in **Matthew 8:5-10**. In this event, Jesus "marveled" at the man's belief. He wonders at one group of people's disbelief, and marvels at another man's belief! Most of us fit somewhere in between. We hope Jesus doesn't wonder at our disbelief (though in reality He might), yet we probably aren't continuously amazing Him with our belief either. Don't we want to be moving in that direction, though? We would be amazed at the possibilities available to us if we would just believe!!

2. Sin and compromise

When the people of God (Israel) turned to serve other gods, they felt God's presence disappear from them. Along with His presence, they also no longer saw His mighty works. Ps. 74:9-11 and 77:7-15 clearly portray this:

"We do not see our signs...why dost Thou withdraw Thy hand, even Thy right hand?...Yet God is my King from of old, who works deeds of deliverance in the midst of

the earth. Thou didst divide the sea by Thy strength..." Psalm 74:9-11

3. God's greater plan is sometimes to help us in the midst of struggle

2 Corinthians 12:8-10 - Paul asked for God to show miraculous power, yet God showed His power in THIS circumstance by working in Paul more than by removing the struggle. We cannot put God into a box and think that just by "believing" everything will work out the way we want.

APPLICATION:

It's easy to TALK about how powerful God is - it's another thing to live it out and put that belief into practice. Here are a couple thoughts on applying today's truths to our lives:

BELIEVE when you pray. When we pray for people who are sick, who don't know Jesus, who have financial difficulties, who have hurting relationships, do we really think God will do anything about it? And how do we increase our "belief"? Romans 10:17 gives us an answer:

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Romans 10:17

Encourage them when they pray to pray Scripture concerning the circumstances they are in. Just exposing ourselves to God's word increases our faith.

REMEMBER when God answers. One great way to build faith is to look back and see how God has answered. Writing down prayer requests, keeping a journal, taking time to give God thanks -- all are ways to remind ourselves what a powerful God we serve.

CLEAN UP. Again, Matthew 5:8 - "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." If there is compromise or impurity in us, we cannot expect to be heard when we petition God for help in other matters.