

Luke 9:37-45

³⁷ The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. ³⁸ A man in the crowd called out, 'Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. ³⁹ A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. ⁴⁰ I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not.'

⁴¹ 'You unbelieving and perverse generation,' Jesus replied, 'how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.'

⁴² Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the impure spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. ⁴³ And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

While everyone was marvelling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, ⁴⁴ 'Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.' ⁴⁵ But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

NIV-UK

1

When my problems are confronted by God's power. Luke 9:37-43

Problems are everywhere. 9:37-39

Problems are personal. 38 "my son"

Problems are particular. 38 "my only child"

Problems are painful. 39 "screams... convulsions... foams"

Problems are permanent. 39 "scarcely ever leaves"

Problems are palliative. 39 "is destroying him"

People of Jesus are incapable of helping. 9:40-41

The followers of Jesus have a desire to help. 40 "I begged your disciples"

The followers of Jesus have no power. 40 "they could not"

The followers of Jesus have no faith. 41 "You unbelieving..."

The followers of Jesus have no answers. 41 "How long"

Power to change. 9:42-43

Evil fights back, even when confronted by Jesus. 42 "Even while..."

Evil is defeated by the rebuke of Jesus. 42 "Jesus rebuked"

Evil effects also need to be healed. 42 "healed"

Evil defeated does not bring about salvation. 43 "amazed"

2

The problem with problems. Luke 9:37-43

Your problem. 9:37-40

You have a family; you have problems. 38 “my son”

You have a history; you have problems. 39 “a spirit seizes him”

You have believers; you have problems. 40 “disciples could not”

My problem. 9:40-41

I have limited power over evil. 40 “disciples... could not”

I have limited power over myself. 41 “unbelieving and perverse”

I have a limitless resource at hand. 41 “Bring your son here”

No problem. 9:42-43

Jesus has power over evil. 42 “rebuked the impure spirit”

Jesus has power to do good. 42 “healed... and gave him back”

Jesus enforces no power of response. 43 “they were all amazed”

3

Problems only keep getting bigger! Luke 9:37-45

A big problem. 9:37-39

A family member out of control. 38-39 “a spirit seizes him”

A family member being destroyed. 39 “destroying him”

A bigger problem. 9:40-41

I lack external spiritual power. 40 “disciples could not”

I lack internal spiritual power. 41 “unbelieving and perverse”

An even bigger problem. 9:42-43

People are only interested in solutions. 42 “healed... gave back”

People are curious for the amazing. 43 “amazed at the greatness”

The biggest problem. 9:44-45

I don’t know enough of the Gospel. 44 “Listen carefully”

I don’t seek enough of the Gospel. 45 “failed... to ask”

4

A little help, please. Luke 9:37-43

A cry for help. 9:37-40

A cry from human relationships. 38 “my son... only child”

A cry from spiritual assault. 39 “a spirit seizes him”

A stern rebuke. 9:41-42

A problem with my heart. 41 “unbelieving and perverse”

A problem with my head. 41 “how long”

A stony silence. 9:42-43

Grateful, but no word of thanks. 42 “healed... gave back”

Amazed, but no word of praise/faith. 43 “all amazed”

5

When failure is normal. Luke 9:37-43

The father – when love fails. 9:37-40

My love cannot solve someone else’s problem. 38 “look at my son”

My love only deepens my own problem. 40 “I begged”

The disciples – when effort fails. 9:40

Past success may not solve today’s problem. v1,2,6 “gave authority”

My skillset may not solve today’s problem. 40 “but they could not”

The Lord – when training fails. 9:41

Learning requires an attentive heart. 41 “unbelieving”

Learning requires an attentive mind. 41 “perverse”

The crowd – when success fails. 9:43

Amazement does not produce change. 43 “all amazed”

Greatness does not produce change. 43 “at the greatness”

6

Groping in the dark. Luke 9:37-43

When I’m feeling hopeless. 9:37-39

I need to plant my hope in God’s nature. Isaiah 40:31 “hope in the Lord”

I need to plant my hope in God’s plans. Jeremiah 29:11 “plans to give you hope”

I need to plant my hope in God’s character. Romans 5:5, 15:13, Psalm 147:11

When I’m feeling helpless. 9:40

My help is in God’s security. Psalm 46:1 “God is our refuge... very present help”

My help is in God’s mercy. Hebrews 4:15-16 “obtain mercy and find grace to help”

My help is in God’s presence. Heb. 13:5-6 “never leave... is my helper”

When I’m feeling faithless. 9:41-43

God is faithful to me. 2 Timothy 2:13 “He remains faithful” (Rom.3:3)

God has great faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23 “great is Your faithfulness”

God has practical faithfulness. 2 Thess.3:3 “the Lord is faithful. He will establish you”

7

Living a “normal” life. Luke 9:37-43

A normal life contains unsolvable problems. 9:37-39

Relational problems. 38 “my son... child”

Spiritual problems. 39 “a spirit seizes him”

Physical problems. 39 “convulsions”

A normal life contains intractable struggles. 9:40-41

I struggle with tumultuous emotions. 40 “begged”

I struggle with unhelpful people. 40 “they could not”

I struggle with unstable faith. 41 “unbelieving and perverse”

A normal life contains positive change. 9:41-43

Positive change acknowledges negative attitude.

The negative within me. 41 “unbelieving and perverse”

The negative around me. 42 “threw him... convulsion”

Positive change accepts spiritual reality. 41-42

Evil spirits need to be suppressed. 42 “rebuked”

Holy Spirit always heals and restores. 42 “healed... gave back”

Positive change glorifies God. 43 “greatness of God”

8

Real discipleship. Luke 9:37-45

Real disciples come down off the mountain. 9:37

Life on the mountain can be great. 27-36 “good to be here”

Life in the valley can be grim. 37 “came down from”

Real disciples have problems they can’t solve. 9:38-40

I should celebrate my past successes. 1,2,6

I should concentrate on my current solutions. 40 “could not”

Real disciples accept rebuke and correction. 9:41

Identify my shortcomings. 41 “You unbelieving and perverse”

Increase my development. 41 “how long shall... put up with you?”

Real disciples look and learn from Jesus. 9:42-43

Learn to be spiritually assertive. 42 “rebuked the impure spirit”

Learn to be relationally generous. 42 “healed... and gave him back”

Real disciples are focused on the Gospel. 9:44-45

I do understand the importance of the Gospel. 44 “Listen carefully”

I don’t understand the depth of the Gospel. 45 “did not understand”

9

Jesus is not just my security blanket. Luke 9:41-45

Remember: Jesus is my Master. 9:41a

Jesus speaks to me directly. "You"

Jesus speaks to me about my spiritual life. "unbelieving"

Jesus speaks to me about my choices. "and perverse"

Remember: Jesus is my Tutor. 9:41b

Jesus expects me to change. "How long"

Jesus helps me to change. "stay with you?"

Jesus requires me to change. "and put up with you?"

Remember: Jesus is my Pastor. 9:41c-42

I can bring any problem to Jesus. "Bring your son here"

I can expect Jesus to address my problem. "healed the boy"

Jesus restores relationships. "gave him back to his father"

Remember: Jesus is my Saviour. 9:43-45

The Gospel must be the priority of my choices. "Listen carefully"

The Gospel must be the priority of my heart. "delivered into the hands of men"

The Gospel must be the priority of my mind. "did not understand"

10

Come out of those difficulties. Luke 9:37-42

Finding my way through difficult situation. 9:37-40

I will always need help. 38 "A man in the crowd"

People can offer some help. 40 "I begged your disciples"

Look to Jesus for lasting help. 38 "Teacher, I beg you"

Finding my way through difficult conversation. 9:40-41

The presenting problem. 40 "they could not"

The underlying problem. 41 "unbelieving and perverse"

Challenging the problem. 41 "how long shall I..."

Finding my way through difficult resolution. 9:41-43

Reveal the problem. 41 "Bring your son here"

Rebuke the problem. 42 "rebuked the impure spirit"

Restore the wholeness. 42 "healed... gave him back"

11

The forest and the trees. Luke 9:37-45

Satan is a tree, not a forest. 9:37-43

Evil is everywhere. 39 "spirit seizes him"

Evil must fail. 42 "healed... and gave him back"

People are trees, not a forest. 9:37-43

People fail in action. 40 "they could not"

People fail in attitude. 41 "unbelieving and perverse"

Look beyond trees; see the forest. 9:43-45

God's plan is big and complex. 44 "delivered into the hands of men."

God's plan is big and scary. 45 "not understand... hidden... not grasp... afraid..."

12

Direction, not distraction. Luke 9:37-45

Don't get lost in the negatives. 9:37-42

The demonic is real, but is a side-track. 39 "a spirit seizes him"

Illness is real, but is a side-track. 39,42 "convulsions... foams"

Don't get lost in the positives. 9:42-43

Exorcism is real, but is a side-track. 42 "rebuked the impure spirit"

Healing is real, but is a side-track. 42 "healed... and gave him back"

Stay focused on the priorities. 9:44-45

Focus on my own spiritual progress. 41 "You unbelieving and perverse"

Focus on Jesus' death and resurrection. 44 "Listen carefully... delivered..."

13

Tough lessons for maturing believers. Luke 9:37-45

Identify what's normal. 9:37-40

Demonic problems are normal in a spiritual world. 39 "a spirit seizes him"

Physical problems are normal in a physical world. 39,42 "convulsions"

Personal problems are normal in a human world. 40,45 "could not... afraid"

Identify the problems. 9:41-45

I am constrained by unfaithfulness. 41 "unbelieving"

I am constrained by sinfulness. 41 "perverse"

I am constrained by time. 41 "how long"

Identify the solutions. 9:41-45

Jesus is Lord over the spiritual realm. 42 "rebuked the impure spirit"

Jesus is Lord over the human realm. 41-42 "Bring... healed... gave back"

Jesus is Lord because of the Gospel. 44 "Listen carefully..."

The Gospel is God's plan from eternity.

The Gospel is God's plan for humanity.

The Gospel is unveiled carefully.

Change the whole world, one person at a time. Luke 9:37-45

Opportunities for improvement are all around me 9:37-41

Our culture is corrupt

God and I are the partnership for improvements 9:42

Individuals can change

Even a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.

Make improvements that are not just individual, but also systemic 9:43-45

But the culture is unmoved

Don't let success move you off the best path

Other possible titles

I don't want another lesson in humility.

Well, what are you going to do about it?

From top to bottom.

When I come down off the mountaintop.

Finding God after the mountaintop experience.

Why is my life such a mess?

I did all the right things, but failed anyway. Why?

Just the same - only worse! (a line from *The Equaliser 2*)

Yesterday's solution (9:1,2,6) does not work on today's problem (9:37-43).

When God comes down.

There's one in every crowd.

Jesus can be very scary!

Grow up. From milk to meat.

Quotes and illustrations

True humility isn't thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less. C S Lewis, Mere Christianity

When people of the faith have so little faith, why would faithless people want to become people of faith? Anonymous

There are many Christian fathers and mothers at this day who are just as miserable about their children as the man of whom we are reading. The son who was once the desire of their eyes, and in whom their lives were bound up turns out a spendthrift, a profligate, and a companion of sinners. The daughter who was once the flower of the family, and of whom they say, this same shall be the comfort in our old age, becomes self-willed, worldly-minded, and a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. Their hearts are well nigh broken. The iron

seems to enter into their souls. The devil appears to triumph over them, and rob them of their choicest jewels. They are ready to cry, I shall go to the grave sorrowing. What good shall my life be to me? Now what should a father and mother do in a case like this? They should do as the man before us did. They should go to Jesus in prayer, and cry to Him about their child. They should spread before the merciful Saviour the tale of their sorrows, and entreat Him to help them. Great is the power of prayer and intercession! The child of many prayers shall seldom be cast away. God's time of conversion may not be our's. He may think fit to prove our faith by keeping us long waiting. But so long as a child lives, and a parent prays, we have no right to despair about that child's soul. Bishop J C Ryle

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the person of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
2 Timothy 3:16-17

Music and songs

After the Mount of Transfiguration

God on the mountain, is still God in the valley.
From the mountains to the valleys... hear our praises. Ot 27

Confession of human failure

I need Thee every hour, most gracious Lord.
I was sinking deep in sin... Love lifted me.
Out of my bondage... Jesus I come to Thee.
Years I spent in vanity and pride... at Calvary. H716

Commitment to faithfulness

Be still my soul, the Lord is on thy side.
Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. MP 52
I'm not ashamed to own my Lord.

Power and compassion of Jesus

Amazing grace (traditional). 401
Amazing grace, my chains are gone. 1067
And can it be that I should gain... Amazing love.
And God cried. Ot 88
At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. H 41
Blessed assurance Jesus is mine. H 687 / C 205
Hide me now... Still. 1003
I go to the Rock.
Jesus, lover of my soul.
Living water. Ot 76
O the deep, deep love of Jesus.
O the mercy of God; the glory of grace.
O to see the dawn... Power of the cross. Ot 62
Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling.

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.
To God be the glory, great things He hath done. H 741
You gave me love, when nobody gave me a prayer. (B J Thomas)
You rescued me. Ot 45

Lordship of Christ

Above all. TS 611
Chain breaker. Ot 72
He is Lord. He is Lord. He is risen from the dead... SiS 49
Jesus shall reign. H 184
Our God is an awesome God. Ot 50
The battle belongs to the Lord. SiS 630

Need of the Gospel

Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take my stand.

Thought starters for personal reflection or group discussion

1. When was the last time you did any serious exercise? Have you considered gym membership?
2. Read Luke 9:41. What tone of voice do you think Jesus used; and what emotion may He have been feeling? How do you think the disciples felt on hearing this? Does this fit your usual image of Jesus?
3. What is the positive and encouraging statement in this verse? How does it offer hope and optimism?
4. Jesus' actions are just as bold as His words. He intervened to solve the presenting problem, and He turned the incident into a teaching opportunity in 9:42-44. Why, and how, did He solve the problem Himself; and b) What did He hope the disciples would learn?
5. Read James 4:2-3. What are some key lessons for effective prayer?
6. Suggest reasons why the incident ends the way it does, in Luke 9:45?

Notes on the text

Key words in Luke 9:45

"They did *not understand*" ἀγνοέω (ἀ + γινώσκω), not know, ignorant, unaware. γινώσκω is factual knowledge gradually obtained, but οἶδα is to see, to perceive, to get it!

"It was *hidden* from them" παρακεκαλυμμένον, veiled, concealed, hidden close-beside - as in 'can't see the forest for the trees'. [only NT occurrence]

“That they did not *grasp* it” αἰσθωνται, perceive by using the senses, understand by using physical senses, hold onto. [only NT occurrence]

“They were *afraid* to ask him about it.” ἐφοβοῦντο, afraid, terrified, frightened, in dread.

The disciples’ persistent use of external, worldly, not spiritual, methods of trying to understand (as presented in v45) explains why (in v41) Jesus described them as ἄπιστος unbelieving / without faith.

Parallel reports of this event, NIV-UK

Matthew 17:14-20	Mark 9:14-29	Luke 9:37-43	John x:y-z
<p>¹⁴ When they came to the crowd,</p> <p>a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. ¹⁵ ‘Lord, have mercy on my son,’ he said. ‘He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water.</p> <p>¹⁶ I brought him to your disciples, but</p>	<p>¹⁴ When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵ As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. ¹⁶ ‘What are you arguing with them about?’ he asked.</p> <p>¹⁷ A man in the crowd answered, ‘Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸ Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid.</p> <p>I asked your disciples to drive out</p>	<p>³⁷ The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him.</p> <p>³⁸ A man in the crowd called out, ‘Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. ³⁹ A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him.</p> <p>⁴⁰ I begged your disciples to drive it</p>	

<p>they could not heal him.'</p> <p>¹⁷ 'You unbelieving and perverse generation,' Jesus replied, 'how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.'</p> <p>¹⁸ Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came</p>	<p>the spirit, but they could not.'</p> <p>¹⁹ 'You unbelieving generation,' Jesus replied, 'how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.'</p> <p>²⁰ So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.</p> <p>²¹ Jesus asked the boy's father, 'How long has he been like this?' 'From childhood,' he answered. ²² 'It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.'</p> <p>²³ "'If you can?'" said Jesus. 'Everything is possible for one who believes.'</p> <p>²⁴ Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!'</p> <p>²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd was</p>	<p>out, but they could not.'</p> <p>⁴¹ 'You unbelieving and perverse generation,' Jesus replied, 'how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.'</p> <p>⁴² Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion.</p> <p>But Jesus rebuked the impure spirit,</p>	
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<p>out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment.</p> <p>¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, 'Why couldn't we drive it out?'</p> <p>²⁰ He replied, 'Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.'</p> <p>²² When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the</p>	<p>running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. 'You deaf and mute spirit,' he said, 'I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.'</p> <p>²⁶ The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, 'He's dead.'</p> <p>²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.</p> <p>²⁸ After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, 'Why couldn't we drive it out?'</p> <p>²⁹ He replied, 'This kind can come out only by prayer.'</p> <p>³⁰ They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, ³¹</p>	<p>healed the boy and gave him back to his father.</p> <p>⁴³ And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.</p> <p>While everyone was marvelling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, ⁴⁴ 'Listen carefully to what I am about to</p>	
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<p>hands of men. ²³ They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life.'</p> <p>And the disciples were filled with grief.</p>	<p>because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.'</p> <p>³² But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.</p>	<p>tell you: the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.'</p> <p>⁴⁵ But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.</p>	
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