



## **Week 4**

### ***It's the Hope...***

#### ***Check-in***

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And as we close this series... like the end of any good sports tv show or movie, today, we'll be looking at a couple quintessential final-game speeches. So, what's your favorite sports tv show or movie? (And if you can quote the final game speech, you get 5 bonus points.)

#### ***Opening Prayer***

God of Miracles, though we sometimes struggle with belief,  
help us hold onto hope.

## **Introduction**

Anyone else feel like they're ready to travel to England and become a soccer hooligan? Well, for three weeks you've gotten the intro course to Premier League football through the TV Show, Ted Lasso. And through the wisdom of Ted and the revolutionary teachings of Jesus Christ, we've learned what it means to build and become a team. Week 1, these "gaffers" encouraged us to, "be a goldfish." That is, we shouldn't worry about our past mistakes or let our failures define us. Week 2, we looked at the steps to build relationships and get through tough times through community, investment of time, and vulnerability, just like Jesus's disciples and Ted's Diamond Dogs. And last week, we were challenged to set aside our tendency to judge and condemn one another, and instead get curious. We'll finish this series by looking at what may be the core tenant of both Jesus's and Ted's coaching philosophies. But first...

**Review: Last week, we talked about our tendency to judge, and how to overcome it by instead being curious about someone and their story. How did you do this week with not judging others, and instead turning to love?**

## **Scripture**

AFC Richmond is facing its worst season in years, and it all comes down to the final game. Win and they stay in the upper tier of English football. Lose and they face the humiliation of dropping down to a lower league. To make matters worse, they play the best team in the

league, and no one believes they can win. Even the football hooligans at the bar are already treating it as if they've lost. And when Ted asks them, "why don't you have a little hope?" the wise ol' bar owner tells him they have a saying here, "it's the hope that kills you." Now, there are very few things you can say to get under Ted's skin, but challenging his eternal optimism is the worst. Put a pin in that story for a moment.

See, Jesus was the same way. Jesus didn't have many buttons you could push to set him off... but a lack of belief seemed to be one of them. In today's Scripture, we'll look at one of those stories. It's the week before Jesus's "big game," when he would be betrayed and killed, (don't worry, he wins in the end... sorry, for the spoiler...) and everyone around him seems to be losing hope. Jesus and his coaching staff, (Peter, James, and John,) were up on the mountain game-planning, and when they get back to the disciples, there's a crowd around them, everyone arguing. Jesus steps in and asks, "what's going on?" Here's where our scripture picks up.

**Read Mark, chapter 9, verses 17 to 24.**

Jesus has been dealing with people losing hope for a while now, and this argument sets him off. And yet, there's a desperate father hoping beyond hope to save his son. We can learn a lot from the eternal optimism that both Jesus and Ted share.

**Question 1: Consider this story... where are you? With whom do you identify? Are you one of the disciples arguing, a disciple or a Pharisee, feeling like you failed the task before you? Are you the father, desperate for a miracle? Maybe you're the son, the one who needs healing? (You could also say you're Jesus coming in to save the day... just don't say you're Jesus too often, that's how you end up leading a cult in a compound in rural Montana.)**

## **Reflection**

If you identified with the father, you are not alone. He responds in a bold and beautiful way to Jesus. Instead of saying what he thought Jesus wanted to hear, he responds in a way no one in all of the gospels has... with an inspiring vulnerability that moves Jesus. He says, (paraphrased,) "Yes, Jesus, I believe... I have heard of your miracles. I've heard of your life-changing power. But I've been let down so many times. I've been disappointed by people who said they could help. So, yes, I believe, but I hesitate, too. Help my unbelief." How often do we feel like that? We know God loves us. We know God is for us. But we have been hurt or have gone through loss, and we struggle with belief. When our hopes have been dashed numerous times, it's easy to live the philosophy, "It's the hope that kills you."

**Question 2: Scale of 1 to 10, how hopeful a person are you? Does it take a lot to shake your optimism, or are you, as Ted called his coaching staff, "just a Negative Nelson"?**

This interaction between Jesus and a desperate father can teach us a lot about hope. First, the father's response to Jesus is...

## **Honest**

He doesn't tell Jesus what he thinks Jesus wants to hear. He responds so boldly, so honestly, it moves Jesus to act. God appreciates our authenticity. Start your relationship with God with honesty. If you're struggling, say so. If you're doubting, say so. If you're losing hope, say so. God can handle it. There's a follow up step to this honesty, though, that the father displays. So, second, to reclaim our hope in the face of struggles, we have to ask God for...

## **Help**

The father doesn't just say, "yeah, I'm desperate and struggling," he goes a step further. He then asks Jesus to change him. Yes, the father asks for his son to be healed, but he also asks Jesus to do a work within him, too. "Help my unbelief." (v. 24.) So, after we get honest with God, ask for God to change you. "God, I believe you care for me... help increase my confidence in you."

**Question 3: Self-assessment time. Which of these two areas do you have a greater difficulty with? Do you struggle more with being honest with God or asking for help? (Or do you have both figured out and should be teaching this section?)**

## Closing

The final lesson we learn from Jesus and the father in this story is, even though we may struggle with belief, we can still hold onto...

## Hope

If the father had no hope, he wouldn't have even been there that day. His *belief* may be slipping, but he still *hopes* his son can be healed. Even though he's struggling, he's placing his hope in Jesus. Let's take the pin out of Ted's story. It's the day of the big game, and like any good sports show, Ted gives the quintessential motivational pregame speech. He says, "so I've been hearing this phrase y'all got over here, that I ain't too crazy about, 'it's the hope that kills you.' ... I disagree... I think it's the lack of hope that comes and gets you. See, I believe in hope. I believe in believe." (s1e10) Ted gave them encouragement, motivation, belief in each other, belief in what they were playing for. Together, as a team, if they believe in miracles, they've got a chance. And so, despite their struggle with belief, they hold on to hope.

**Read Mark, chapter 9, verses 25 to 27.**

We have a coach who is still at work in the miracle business. We have a savior who is still changing hearts and lives. We have a God who is still present, coaching us through our most difficult matches, even when we are full of unbelief. This doesn't mean we'll win every match

or that things will turn out how we want them, but it does mean we can still have hope in a God who holds our futures.

## ***Series Conclusion***

And so, take heart in stories like we've talked about this series through the wisdom of Ted Lasso and Jesus. 1) that we have a God who will provides for us so we don't need to worry, 2) that we have our own Diamond Dogs who will love us and support us, 3) that if we set aside our judgment of others, we can build more teammates, and finally, that if we hold onto hope, anything is possible. Believe in hope. Believe in believe.

**Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations.**

**Close in prayer.**