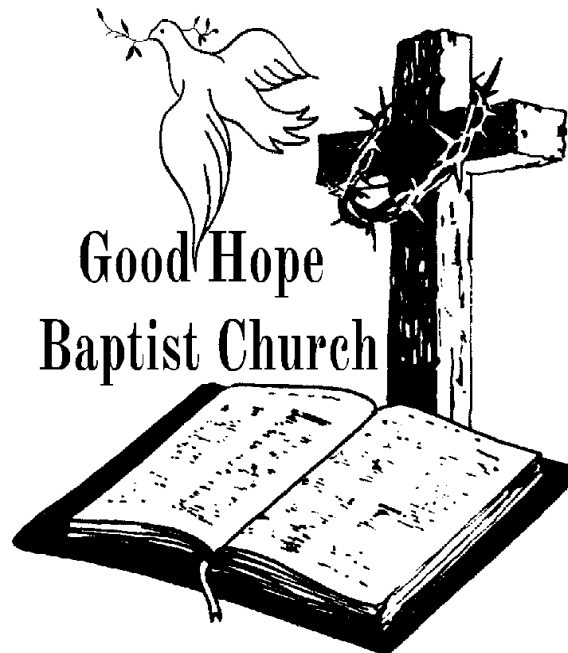


# The Believing Father

Mark 9:23-24



Good Hope  
Baptist Church

Living Together In The Love Of God

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**FOCAL Read Together** Mark 9:23-24 <sup>KJV</sup> Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things [are] possible to him that believeth. 24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

**Illustrate & Open** I remember many years ago when the Lord first called Sherry and I to the ministry preaching a *Mother's Day* sermon at my first Church. I can't remember which text I used, but I do remember one young woman who came to me at the end of the service. "Sandy" told me that she she hoped that **the next time I preached a Mother's Day message that I would more adequately address the needs of the *single mothers in the congregation***. I had never thought about it, but there were an awful lot of single mothers in our local Church. Some mothers had children "out of wedlock". Others had been divorced or abandoned by their husbands, left to raise the children alone.

In our world today many times the role of the father in the family is underplayed or even mocked. A well known feminist was quoted as saying:

**"A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle."**

Men are denigrated in the movies, on television, and especially in commercials. I have noted in the past a television commercial where the central character was a young girl of about 14 years old. At the end of the commercial she said, **"It's so simple, even my dad can do it"** (grin). *Translation*, **"Even an ignorant oaf like dad - simpleton that he is - can do it"**. Homosexual

activists are increasingly militant about normalizing same sex marriage. According to the world, fatherhood really doesn't matter.

The truth of the matter is that fathers are important! The important role that the father fills is emphasized by the fact that God is called **"The Heavenly Father"** (Matthew 6:9). **The Lord Jesus called God "Father" one hundred and sixty times in the New Testament.**

A 26-year study published by the **American Psychological Association** found that **children with very involved fathers in their lives are more likely to be sensitive to the needs of others in adulthood compared to those who do not have involved fathers.** Fathered children are - on the average - more generous and thoughtful in society. That shouldn't be surprising. **63% of young suicides, 85% of children with personality disorders, 71% of High School dropouts, 75% of all youth in chemical abuse centers, and 85% of all youth that are in prison** can be traced back to a home where the father abandoned or abused his children.

Children need God fearing fathers!

### **Fathers Need To Be Involved In Their Children's Lives**

**Illustrate** A little girl wanted to draw a picture for her daddy. She went to her daddy and, crawling into his lap, said **"Daddy, come and see my picture."** He was

watching sports on television, and told her **"Not now, honey. Dad's busy."** She left the room, coming back about 10 minutes later. Once more she crawled onto her daddy's lap. **"Daddy, will you come see my picture now?"** Her dad, annoyed, said **"Can't you see I'm busy? Don't bother me right now. I'll come and look at your picture later when I'm ready."** The little girl went back to her room. Two hours later the game ended, and dad remembered his daughter. Going to her room he said, **"Honey, I'm ready. Can I see your picture now?"** The little girl said, **"Yes daddy"**, and showed him the picture. She said, **"This is a picture of me, my brother, and mommy playing outside with our doggy. Isn't it pretty?"** Her daddy said, **"That is pretty, honey! But how come I'm not in the picture?"** She said, **"Because you were inside watching TV, daddy!"**

Fathers need to be involved with their children.

One of the names of our Heavenly Father is **Jehovah Shammah** which means **"The God Who is There"**. Just as God our Father is present for us, He expects the fathers He made to be present for their children.

**1** **Children need a father who will lovingly encourage and help them.** In our text we see a father who brought his son to Jesus, saying:

**Context** Mark 9:17-18 <sup>KJV</sup> ... **Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; 18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth**

**away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.**

This father didn't know what was wrong with his son. He said "**he has a *dumb spirit***". The word translated "**dumb**" is unfortunate old English, because the Greek ALALOS means "**speechless**".

He literally said "**there is something possessing him that makes him unable to speak**". Something had hold of the boy that made him **foam at the mouth and grind his teeth**. On top of that the boy was "**pinning away**". He wasn't eating well, and was slowly starving to death.

This child was not in good shape! He wasn't the top of his class at school. He wasn't voted "most likely to succeed" by his peers. Look at your context. We read:

**Context** Mark 9:20 <sup>KJV</sup> **And they brought {the boy} unto {Jesus}: and when {the boy} saw {Jesus}, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.**

"**And they**". It took more than one person to handle this child. When you have a THEY you have more than one! The child was in bad shape! When the child saw Jesus "**straightway the spirit tare him**" - literally "**threw the boy into a convulsion**" so much so that he "**rolled around on the ground, foaming at the mouth**". In the midst of this shocking behavior Jesus asked:

**Context** Mark 9:21a <sup>KJV</sup> .... **How long is it ago since**

**this came unto him?**

"**How long has he been this way?**" What did the father answer? Was it just a day or two he went through this? No. The father said,

**Context** Mark 9:21b <sup>KJV</sup> .... **Of a child.**

**Word Study** That word "**child**" is the Greek PAIDIOTHEN, which literally means "**from infancy**". Dad was saying, "**He's been like this ever since he was a little baby.**"

Consider this for a moment. Those of you who have experienced the birth of a child know that the most important thing is not whether the child will be a little boy or a little girl, but that the **child will be healthy and happy**. The first thing I did at the birth of each of my children was to count their fingers and toes, to look into their eyes, to hold them and thank God they were healthy. But not every parent experiences that joy. **When this man's child was born, he tried to hold him in his arms, but he fought him, spat at him, foamed at the mouth and bit at him**. Since this child was a baby he had been this way. And yet, how did this father introduce this boy to Jesus?

**Context** Mark 9:17-18 <sup>KJV</sup> ... **Master, I have brought unto thee my son ...**

This was not "**the boy**", nor did this father show shame for his son. Many men today would have tried to get out of such a situation. They would have walked away from

the mother, abandoning the child. A genuine father loves his children no matter what might come.

The great statesman **Winston Churchill** grew up with a father who berated him constantly. In his book *The Last Lion* Churchill wrote:

**"I would rather had been an apprentice for a brick layer, or run errands as a messenger boy, or dressed the windows in the local shops, if I could have had the support of my father."**

Fathers, your children need you to stand by them both emotionally as well as physically - even when circumstances aren't optimal. Children are a blessing from the Lord. The Scripture says:

**Psalms 127:3-5 (KJV) Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. 4 As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. 5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.**

Children are called "**arrows in the quiver of a mighty man**". Just as an arrow has potential, every child has potential. Fathers are to take their children to the Lord.

**2** Children need a father who will believe *for* them, a father who will train them in the way of faith.

**Illustrate** I have met many parents who tell me "**we're going to let little Suzie make up her own mind about the Lord**", or "**we just don't want to push religion on our child**". That doesn't make sense! Children don't know what's best for them. You make your child eat when he won't eat, and make him go to bed and sleep when he won't sleep. If your child wanted to play football in the middle of the Interstate Highway you wouldn't let them do it. Children need to be trained in all things. They need to be brought to the Lord. The father in our text today was *persistent* in bringing this child to the Lord. He told Jesus ....

**Context** Mark 9:18 <sup>KJV</sup> ... **I spake to thy disciples that they should cast {the spirit} out {of my son}; and they could not.**

"Lord, I've been here before. I brought my son before to Your disciples, but they couldn't help. But I didn't give up - I'm here now looking to You!" Children learn faith - or lack of faith - from their parents. Fathers need to set the standard of faith. This man called Jesus "**Master**" and kept coming back to the Lord with his child.

**Illustrate** A little girl, with shining eyes and little face aglow, said, "**Daddy, it is almost time for Sunday school. Let's go! They teach us there of Jesus' love, and how He died that we might all have everlasting life by trusting in Him!**" "Oh, no," said Daddy, "**not today, I have worked so hard all the week, I am going to the woods and to the creek. There I can relax and rest. I must have one day to rest, and fishing is fine,**

they say. **So run along. Don't bother me. We'll go to church some other day!**" Months and years have passed, but Daddy hears that plea no more: **"Let's go to Sunday school!"** Those childish years are over and that Daddy is growing old, when life is almost through, he finds time to go to church. But what does daughter do? She says, **"Oh, Daddy, not today. I stayed up almost all last night, and I've got to get some sleep!"** (Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, #1628, Assurance Publishers, p. 431).

We are given opportunities to train our children and grandchildren when they are young. The Scripture tells us as parents - and particularly as fathers - to ...

**Proverbs 22:6<sup>KJV</sup> Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.**

Persist in your faith, and keep on bringing your child to the Lord. The car you buy your child for High School will be in a junkyard ten years from now - but the faith you teach them (or lack thereof) will last their lifetime.

God told the men of ancient Israel:

**Deuteronomy 6:6-9<sup>KJV</sup> ... these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they**

**shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. 9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.**

The fathers are commanded by the Lord to train the next generation of children in the Word of God. We as men are called to **teach** what we know to be true, to let His Word govern our **talk and walk**. What we do now in building faith in our children will be of value when that child grows up.

**Illustrate** David Kraft was a big, strong man -- all muscle. At the age of 32, he was six feet, two inches tall and weighed 200 pounds. He had been to seminary and ended up working with the *Fellowship of Christian Athletes*. Then he was diagnosed with **cancer**. It wracked his body, and over a period of time, **he dropped from 200 pounds to 80 pounds**. When David was about ready to pass from this life into eternity, he asked his father to come into his hospital room. Lying there in bed, he looked up and said, **"Dad, do you remember when I was a little boy, how you used to hold me in your arm close to your chest?"** David's father nodded. Then David said, **"Do you think, Dad, you could do that one more time? One last time?"** Again his father nodded. He bent down to pick up his 80 pound son, and held him close to his chest, so that the son's face was right next to the father's face. They were eyeball to eyeball. Tears were streaming down both faces, and the son said to his father, **"Thank you for building the kind of character into my life that can enable me to face even a moment like this."** (Ron Lee Davis, "Introducing Christ to Your Child," Preaching Today, Tape

No.92)

Your children need to see a persistent faith in Jesus Christ now. It is the faith you build in them *now* that will help them overcome the later terrors this life can hold.

### **Faithful Fathers Will Be Rewarded**

This faithful father told the Lord Jesus that the spirit that was on his son was destructive. He said:

**Context** Mark 9:22 <sup>(KJV)</sup> ... oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: ....

The devil desires to have your children. He will try to poison your children with drugs or alcohol, pass disease on them through sexual experimentation, or harden their conscience to turn away from God and the Scripture. Even the evangelist **Billy Graham's son Franklin** rebelled against the Lord and his parents for a time. How did Billy handle it? He said:

**"Franklin told about his rebel years of drinking, drugs, smoking, girls, and fast driving. .... he said he never forgot a conversation I had with him in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974. I assured him of our love, no matter what he did, where he went, or how he ended up. .... He also knew we would never stop praying for him. It was actually during a trip to the Middle East, while in Jerusalem, that he made his firm decision to follow Christ."**

Billy Graham's honest faith in the Lord reached his son when nothing else would. The faithful father of our text asked the Lord:

**Mark 9:22 <sup>(KJV)</sup> ... if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.**

Note what he says to the Lord. **"IF" You can do anything, have compassion on US.** He put an IF on the Lord. If You will Lord, will You fix us? The Lord put the IF right back on this father. He said ....

**Context** Mark 9:23 <sup>KJV</sup> .... **IF thou canst believe, all things [are] possible to him that believeth.**

Jesus said **"If you'll believe in Me it is possible"**. The child couldn't believe for himself, but the father could believe for him. The father then gave one of the most poignant statements I've ever heard. He **cried out with tears, saying ...**

**Context** Mark 9:24 <sup>KJV</sup> .... **Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.**

The elements of genuine faith are **surrender and admission**. This father cast himself on the Lord unashamedly, for he wanted his child to be saved.

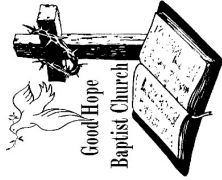
This man was LOUD in his request. In verse 25 we read in another version:

**Mark 9:25 <sup>(NIV)</sup> When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."**

The boy was healed! Fathers, you are important in your families. Let your children see your faith not just in Church but at home!

**Illustrate** Before there was a Billy Graham there was an evangelist every bit as popular named **Dwight L. Moody**. One night Reverend Moody was preaching in a big circus tent in Chicago. He was preaching **Luke 19:10: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."** As he came to the end of the sermon a police officer brought a young child to the platform where Reverend Moody was. The boy had been wandering in the crowd, lost but unconcerned. The Evangelist took the child in his arms and asked the crowd to look at him. Then he said, **"The father of this child is more anxious to find the child than the child is to be found. So it is with our heavenly Father. He has been looking for you to come back to Him for many years."** Right then a man with a worried look on his face elbowed his way to the platform. The boy saw him and ran to his father and threw himself into his outstretched arms. The crowd broke out into a mighty cheer. Then Reverend Moody said, **"God will receive you in the same way if you run back to Him today."**

Faithful fathers will, in time, be rewarded by faithful children. May God move your hearts with these words.



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