

**I believe; help my unbelief:
Jesus and a desperate parent**

Mark 9:14-29

Who is participating in or watching this event?

Why is there a crowd? Why an argument? What's the atmosphere?

Focusing on the relationship between Jesus and the father of the boy:

- How long has the son been in trouble?
- Imagine the experience of the father throughout this event. Can you think of a word or two to describe what he might be feeling:
 - When he goes to find Jesus and finds the disciples instead (and they can't help)
 - When the teachers and disciples are arguing
 - When Jesus engages with him (note what is happening to the son while Jesus is talking with the father, v20)
 - When the demons leave and it looks like his son is dead
 - When Jesus lifts the son to his feet
- What does the father ask of Jesus? How does Jesus reply? What is the father's response? What does it seem like Jesus is doing in this conversation? Why doesn't he take care of the son right away?
- Does this father have faith?

v 28-29 Jesus had given his disciples authority to heal and cast out demons (Mark 6:7-13). But they couldn't do it this time. What was needed for this seemingly impossible situation? Why might the disciples not have prayed when the boy was brought to them?

Bringing it home

What are some areas in which you *worry about* or *grieve for* your children?

What are your impossible situations, your “if you can” places in parenting? What do you believe? What do you have a hard time believing?

What do your children need that can only come from Jesus by prayer?

Imagine Jesus engaging with you in your worries about your children. What would he ask you? How would you reply? What is something you would like God to do for your faith and for your children?

About the dad in Mark 9: “Though his faith may have been deficient as well in breadth as in depth, yet it enabled him to realize that the Messiah who stood before him was the Lord, and it led him to place all his reliance upon him. He did not believe in the disciples; he had once trusted them and failed. He did not believe in himself; he knew his own impotence to drive out the evil spirit from his child. He believed no longer in any medicines or men...but he believed the man of the shining countenance who had just come down from the mountain...Dost thou rest in him, in him thy God, thy brother, thy Savior; in him as living among the sons of men; in him as bleeding and suffering, as a substitutionary sacrifice, in thy stead; in him as risen from the dead no more to die; in him as sitting at the right hand of the Father, clothed with power to save? Dost thou trust him?”

–C.H. Spurgeon, “Faith’s Dawn and Its Clouds”

Mark 9:14-29

¹⁴When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵As 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.

¹⁷A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

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.”

²⁰So 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.

²¹Jesus 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.”

²³“If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”

²⁴Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

²⁵When Jesus saw that a crowd was 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.”

²⁶The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

²⁸After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

²⁹He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”