

# HELP MY UNBELIEF

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MARK 9:23

This story of a desperate father bringing his tormented son to Jesus's disciples may seem like an unusual choice for an Advent devotional, but in this season of waiting, there's a lot we can learn.

The boy in this passage had been robbed of his speech and hearing and suffered violent seizures. His father brought him to the disciples hoping for help, but they couldn't drive the demon out. When Jesus arrives, the crowd quickly gathers around him. The father explains his son's condition, his voice filled with pain and desperation. Jesus expresses frustration—maybe with the disciples for their lack of faith, maybe with the crowd for their doubt, or maybe with a world so broken and afflicted by evil. Whatever the case, his heart is still full of compassion.

Having just watched the disciples fail, the father wrestles with whether Jesus could really do what no one else had been able to do. In desperation, he cries out words that many of us can relate to: "I believe; help my unbelief!" (v. 24). Jesus doesn't scold him for this mix of faith and doubt. Instead, he acts. With a word, Jesus commands the demon to leave and never return, and the boy is healed. Later, when the disciples ask why they couldn't cast it out, Jesus answers simply: "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer" (v. 29).

So why look at this passage during the Christmas season? Like the father, we often say we believe in God while secretly carrying around pockets of unbelief. We celebrate the miracle

of the virgin birth and proclaim that Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us, yet sometimes we quietly doubt whether he can truly transform the darkness we see in the world around us—or even the struggles we face within our own hearts.

Advent is a season of hope and expectation, a time to remember that the same God who sent his Son into the world is still active today. The same Jesus who healed that boy is still redeeming lives, healing hearts, and shining light into dark places. Like the father in Mark 9, we need to cry out: "I believe; help my unbelief."

There's also a lesson here for us in the disciples' experience. Jesus had given them authority, yet somewhere along the way they seemed to forget their complete dependence on him. His comment about prayer suggests they were leaning on their own strength instead of God's power. We can fall into that same trap—trying to handle life on our own and then wondering where God is when things don't go as planned.

This Advent, let's remember how deeply we depend on him. And let's ask God to grow our faith so that our prayer echoes the father's words: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."



## PRAYER

*God, as we celebrate this season, please help us tear down any limits we have placed on you. We know that you are the same Jesus who came to us in a manger, healed the sick, and redeemed the lost, and that you are still at work in our lives today. Lord, may our hearts echo the father's heart in this story: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."*



BY DANIEL DAVIS  
Director of Middle School Ministry