



From the Manger to the Cross, the Men in Christ's Life: Father of a Boy with an Evil Spirit
by Kris Swiatocho
Editors note: This is a part of a series.

My stepfather is only one example of a man who has impacted my life as a result of his relationship with Christ. Throughout this series, I want to share with you about some of the other men who have impacted my life solely because of their relationship with Jesus. I believe as I share that you, too, will connect with them and discover for yourself how God has always had a plan for you, is working it out in your life and will never leave you.

"Lord, I do believe, but help me to overcome my unbelief," said the father of the boy who was possessed. Do you ever doubt? Doubt God is God? Doubt God can do anything? Doubt that God is in control and that even if you try to be in control, you aren't? Do you question God's work in your life? His decisions of what is best for you? I do, all the time.

Last night I was sitting and doing my Sunday school lesson for my class. It was on sin. Yeah, a great subject. When we sin, we do what we want versus what God wants. We are saying God isn't good enough. His death on the cross wasn't good enough. That we don't trust Him. I had to really think about all of this in my own life. The lesson had me look at a list of sins and rate them from 0 to 10 of how much they were in my life. Then I was to pray and ask God for the ones that I needed to bring to Him. The ones that I needed repentance from. The ones that I needed to turn from. What hit me when I was doing the lesson is how much doubting God is a sin, too. Just like the father who said he believed that Jesus could heal his son but at the same time ask the Lord to help him in his unbelief. Not so much of not believing Jesus is the son of God but believing His power, His ability, and His truth are real. Believing what He can do versus what I can do. Knowing His way is the best way NO MATTER how I think or feel about it. What I think doesn't matter. It's not about me. What is cool about this is that God knows that we are going to do this, and it will take a constant relationship of turning back to him to restore, renew and grow it.

What I love about this man, this dad is he asked the Lord for help. It's OK to ask the Lord for help to trust Him, to follow Him, to believe in who He says He is. Because in my finite mind—with my finite ability—I can do nothing and I need Him in all parts of my life. Whew! I need Him to help me in everything and the great thing is, he wants to. He wants us to turn to him constantly, because we know that is where our direction lies.

When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. "What are you arguing with them about?" he asked. A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever 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." "O unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." 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. Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. "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." "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" 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 spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up. After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."

Mark 9:14-29



What I Have Learned from This Father:

1. As you grow closer to Christ, looking to him will come naturally.

I love how the disciples—and even the crowd—turned to Jesus when he walked up. They (including the father) turn not just quickly, but with wonder, and are overwhelmed. They knew who He was and what He could do. They had seen or experienced His power. They turned to Him because the disciples couldn't do what they wanted in healing this boy. Sometimes we can quickly make decisions based on past experiences with Christ—and that is good, but sometimes we can't and we need time to talk directly to God. Do we turn to Jesus when we do have questions, concerns, or troubles? How about when things are going great and we need to praise Him? Do we really seek Him for His direction? Do we do all of this with excitement because we trust His answers or do our feet drag, not wanting to hear what He has to say? Are we afraid of what he might say or tell us to do? As we draw closer to Christ, it will come naturally to keep going to Him. And not only will you grow, but others around you will as well.

When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

Mark 9:14-15

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 2:46-47

2. Not everything we ask for will be given to us, at least not in the way we think.

Sometimes we come to the Lord asking for healing, for encouragement, for help with finances, for God to bring us the love of our lives, the right job, etc. Sometimes God gives us what we want, and sometimes he doesn't. I believe God answers all prayer with yes, no, maybe and not now. This man came to find Jesus and his disciples, but when he got to where they were he encountered the disciples first. He asked that they would heal his son. Maybe it was because he had heard they had the power like Jesus or maybe the disciples told them they could. We know in some instances the disciples were also using their gifts to heal. But why not now? Why didn't it work? Because Jesus had a purpose in waiting to heal this child. And sometimes he has a purpose in having us wait, too. Wait to give us what we want. The new house, the perfect promotion, the healing of a loved one or the salvation of a loved one. Remember, God's timing is perfect. His purpose will always prevail. Sometimes we need to stop trying to make our lives happen. Why in the world would you want something God doesn't want for you? Why would you want to be out of His will?

"What are you arguing with them about?" he asked. A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever 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."

Mark 9:16-18

3. Jesus is frustrated with the father and with me, too.

Just like in Jesus' time, He was very frustrated with those around him. They (including this father) had seen His power, His miracles, His ability to heal and yet, they still had doubt. Each of us reading this right now has had the experiences of millions of peoples' testimony since Christ's birth. We actually have the Bible as our instruction book and yet, we act just like those did in relation to this little boy. As if we don't know why we are the way we are? Why we sin? Why we doubt or don't believe? And Jesus is asking me the same thing he asked the people standing around this possessed boy. How much longer shall he put up with me, with us? What is it going to take? What is it going to take to make you stop doing some



of the things you know are wrong? What is it going to take for you to change? To reconcile a relationship? To ask forgiveness from someone? To stop lying to those you love? How long, how long?

"O unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

Mark 9:19

4. There are many people lost in our world, even possessed by the enemy.

If you are saved and have asked the Lord into your life then you have the light; the Holy Spirit is living in you. Understand that the enemy, the devil, cannot live in you anymore—although most of you know the enemy can still greatly influence you. This boy was possessed, lost and the enemy was in him, affecting him, controlling him to the point of trying to kill him whenever possible. Jesus, asked the father how long he had been this way to show the crowd that this behavior had been the same for many years. This would be a way to show the power of what Jesus could do in an instant. In an instant, God can heal us, fix us, provide for us, restore us, etc. It all comes from Him. This father had endured years of seeing his son in pain. Finally he learned where the healing came from. Praise the Lord for his healing!

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. Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him.

Mark 9:20-22a

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

1 John 4:4

5. Everything is possible for him who believes. It is possible, but it doesn't mean it will happen.

First of all, I was so excited to read this scripture again. Everything is possible. Anything I can dream of, think of, pray for, etc., is possible. I could be president. Well, not sure I would want that. I could invent a cure for cancer. Well, it would help if I was a doctor. Hmmm, I could write and teach the Word of God to tens of thousands of people, write Bible studies and travel around the world, without a seminary degree, and being a woman and over 40. Yes, everything is possible for him who believes, and I believe. But what is also important to learn here is just because I believe, it doesn't mean God will give it. It's about trusting him for what is best for me. It's about faith. It's about peace in His direction. It's also about allowing Him to equip me so that I can do whatever He wants me to do. This father would be able to see what the power of God could do.

But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."

Mark 9:22a-23

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Matthew 19:26

6. I learned about humility.

If you can do anything, take pity and help us. Not that he believed Christ couldn't but it came across to me as "if you want to do anything, please understand my situation ... I need your help." And the Lord helped him. Sometimes the Lord



allows pain in our lives, situations and hurts so that we learn to grow in our relationship with Him. He may be trying to see if you are serious about making changes, about following Him and about serving Him. So what do you need to be humble about? What do you need to go to Christ about and lay before him? For what do you need to say I can't do this, and I need your help in my life?

Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

Deuteronomy 8:2

7. This father taught me about courage.

I shared in my opening paragraph of how it's OK to ask for help. Help to even believe. We are the flesh and as a result we get turned around daily, hourly and even sometimes minute to minute. It takes courage like this father to say, "Help me to overcome by unbelief." He wasn't saying I don't believe; he just needed continuous help to believe, because he sins and falls short. Sometimes we can get prideful when it comes to being around other believers. We don't want anyone to think that we aren't living this righteous life perfectly. That we would NEVER doubt God or say we don't believe sometimes. STOP and be honest with yourself. Every time you sin you are saying to God that you don't believe. But you know what is cool here? Each time we turn back from our sin, Jesus is there, waiting.

Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

Mark 9:24

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

Deuteronomy 31:6

8. We have victory over the enemy.

I don't know how many of you ever noticed in verse 25 that it says "and never enter him again." Our salvation comes from Jesus. When we are saved, it brings a power of light over darkness. The devil, the enemy, cannot dwell in us any longer. When I became a Christian, Jesus was rebuking the enemy on my behalf. He was telling him that he had no power over me. That he could not enter into me again. Isn't that amazing? This father could rest in knowing his son would not be the same; he would not only be healed, but the enemy could not enter him again. His son would have victory over the enemy.

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."

Mark 9:25

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

Luke 10:19

9. Jesus is always reaching out to us, but are we reaching back?

What I love about this part of the story is how the crowd, the boy looked dead. I mean, if you had a demon controlling you, throwing you to the ground, trying to kill you, how would you look? But seriously, they thought he was dead. All the more showing the power of Christ. When Christ heals, he restores. He replenishes. He is the Father of the downpour. Do you need salvation? Restoration? Reconciliation. Do you need to be renewed in Christ? Maybe you just need rest. Jesus



went on to reach his hand out to the boy who was on the ground, taking his hand and lifting him to his feet. Jesus never moves, we do. Jesus is always trying to reach us. Are we reaching back?

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

Mark 9:26-27

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Psalms 51:10

10. Sometimes it takes prayer.

Wow, sometimes it takes prayer. The disciples asked Jesus in private: "Hey, Jesus, I mean, we have these different gifts. We have healed in the past, and this time we couldn't do anything. What did we do wrong? Did we miss something? I mean, I mean. ..." I can just hear them. They were stunned that they couldn't heal this boy. But then Jesus said that this healing could have only come by prayer. It's not that anything we do in Christ we aren't doing prayerfully. But sometimes, due to being a Christian for a while, we don't have to always stop and ask God's direction. We know from experience what we need to do. I believe Christ is showing them that sometimes when we use our gifts for the body, it will take more than just doing something; it will take time, humility, submission, belief and prayer. Not just surface prayer but deep prayer. Prayer that becomes a witness to others. Prayer that takes you into a level with the Lord where you have never been. Prayer that changes you and others. Remember, prayer is our time with God one-on-one. Some things we ask for will not happen unless we are in this type of communication with God. It is through prayer that we hear from God, know the direction for our lives and ultimately change.

After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."

Mark 9:28-29

The father of this boy loved his son. So much that he brought his child to Jesus and his disciples. He knew they could heal his son, but he also still had doubt. And he still said things to show his doubt. Just like you and me.

As I have been writing this series over the last year or so, I have dedicated each study to my step-father—who like Joseph, the step-dad of Jesus, and this father, loves me very much. My dad has Alzheimer's and recently took a turn for the worse. In one day his health declined and he couldn't walk or eat or talk clearly. Through deep prayer, God answered the way I wanted and he came back to us. He was able to walk some, eat sitting up and even tease me as usual. I know I am losing my dad, my friend, my hero. I write this article now, laying my father at the foot of Jesus saying, "Help me to believe anything is possible, because I know you can restore my dad. But if you don't, continue to use what is left of his life to help others grow toward you."

Lord, help us in our unbelief.

*God-Incident: Weekly, and sometimes daily, I ask those I minister to if they have had a God-Incident—meaning, that each day they need to remember to ask God to show up in their lives. Then, start looking for it to happen. It might show up as an opportunity to pray for someone or share your faith, a beautiful sunset or the smell of flowers, or in a hug for you. No matter how it shows up, it will come to you if you look for it. Start today by praying for God to show up each day, for an opportunity to share your faith with someone, to experience Him. Trust me, as time goes on, He will show up and boy, how amazing it is. What is so cool about it all is that the more you experience God, the less of the world gets in. And I am all for staying full of Christ!



Kris Swiatocho is the President and Director of TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries and FromHisHands.com Ministries. Kris has served in ministry in various capacities for the last 20 years. An accomplished trainer and mentor, Kris has a heart to reach and grow leaders so they will in turn reach and grow others. She is currently working on her third Bible study, *From the Manger to the Cross: The Men in Jesus' Life*. Her second Bible study, *From the Manger to the Cross: The Women in Jesus' Life*, was published last fall and is available on her websites. Her first book, *Singles and Relationships: A 31-Day Experiment*, was co-authored with Dick Purnell of Single Life Resources.

TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries helps churches, pastors and single adult leaders evaluate, develop and support their single adult ministries through high-energy speaking engagements, results-oriented consulting and training and leadership development conferences and seminars. [Click here](#) to request a FREE "How to Start a Single Adult Ministry" guide.

FromHisHands.com Ministries is Kris's speaking ministry. If you've ever heard her speak, you know that Kris is the kind of speaker who keeps the crowd captivated, shares great information and motivates people to make a difference in the lives of those around them! She speaks to all church audiences on everything from "first impression" ministry to women's topics to singles and young adults. She can speak on a Sunday morning, at a woman's retreat or for a single adults conference. Bring Kris to your church today!

Singles and Relationships by Kris Swiatocho and Dick Purnell

Many singles are Christians who wonder if God will ever bring a mate their way or if they should just stop focusing on a future with a marriage partner and live the single life to the fullest. Kris Swiatocho and Dick Purnell offer solid biblical answers for singles in this newest title in Dick's popular 31-Day Experiment Bible study.