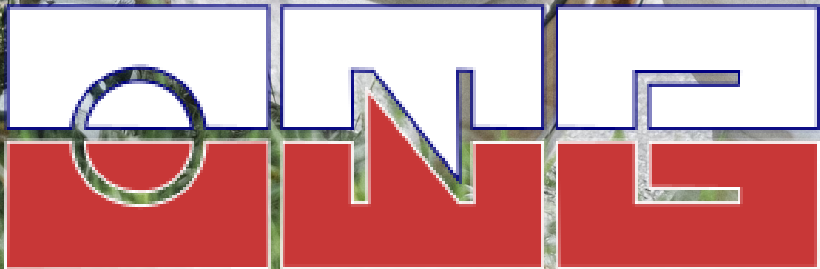




INSIDE:

**+ Resonating Stories
of Biblical Fathers**



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Editor's Note:

With Father's Day approaching, we asked our writers to select one of their favorite human fathers from the Bible and tell us why that person's story resonates with them.

Jairus, a Father Willing to Sacrifice His Future for His Child

Written by:

Rev. Cana Moore

When considering fathers in the scriptures, there are many parents one could write about. Fathers who were extraordinary, whose lives and reputation carried their children far. Fathers whose poor choices affected their lives, the lives of their children and grandchildren, and their entire community.

This article will reflect on a father who only gets one story, and though we use his name to tell it, the story centers on his child and not on himself.

Jairus' story is found in Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; and Luke 8:40-56. In these texts, we see the raising of Jairus' daughter after she has died. This story is not really about Jairus, so

why speak of his place in it? Those with a desire to live more faithful lives can see the ways that Jairus is committed to his faith, shows his deep love for his child and family, and learns from his own assumptions instead of refusing to be humbled.

We witness the faith of Jairus in two primary ways. First, we see that he is a religious leader. This demonstrates his dedication to his community and to their spiritual flourishing. Certainly there are those who abuse religious power, then and now, but from the other elements of the story we can assume that he was a man of genuine devotion. To spend time in the scriptures and the laws in order to lead shows a commitment to faith and the way that faith affects the community.

This also brings us to the second element of Jairus' faith, which is the conflict of asking Jesus for a healing for his daughter. We are not told what kind of illness she had or how long it had been going on, but we can see from Jairus' willingness to approach Jesus in a public way that he was a desperate father whose only thought was his daughter's healing.

The religious leaders were threatened by this wandering rabbi who often rejected the rules of the day for alternate interpretations. What would become of Jairus' reputation and leadership opportunities if he spoke to Jesus publicly? But out of his love for his daughter and his family, he came and begged Jesus to heal her.

Another crucial element of Jairus' story is his family,

Jairus, a Father Willing to Sacrifice (Continued)

which, for the purposes of this story, includes his entire household. They are dedicated to him, as he is to them. When he waits while Jesus takes a moment with the recently healed woman, some people from his household arrive to tell him that his daughter is dead and to leave the teacher. As Jairus and Jesus arrive at the house, the normal mourning community is present, making a huge racket. They are not alone in their grief. Jairus' dedication to his family is the center of this story, and in some ways it is the thing we can be most confident of in his life.

In connection to our earlier conversation about Jairus' faith, I want to reflect also on his humility. When he

comes to Jesus to ask for the life of his daughter, whether to restore her to life or to offer her healing, he comes in humility. The text tells us that he comes on his knees, pleading with Jesus for her healing.

It also gives us a profound statement, less confident in Mark's Gospel but more strongly in Matthew. He says to Jesus, *"If you will come and put your hand on her, she will live."* Whether he is fully confident or simply speaking in faith and hope for God's work in Jesus, it reflects a heart that is willing to receive.

Jairus may never be on a Wall of Faith, nor will his name rise in popularity for children because of the faith example he set, but for us as

readers he brings an example of devotion, love, and humility. As a father, he was committed to a world he believed in through the formation of the community around him. We see that he invested in the family that was given to him, large and small. Like us, Jairus is given a chance to see wondrous things and be humbled by the work and power of God. May we seek to be faithful, humble, and committed to our families and communities, always seeking Christ as our teacher and healer.



The Rev. Cana Moore is the pastor of Hays Christian Church

God's Mercy Transforms a Father and His Family

Written by:
Rev. Sabian Chaney

With the breakdown of the family within our culture, Father's Day can be difficult for many. As men and fathers, we don't always get it right, but as we experience the mercy of God, we have a chance to reset.

We find an unnamed man in the Bible--all we really know about him is his job title. This father, who worked in the ancient city of Philippi, was likely leading his family as best as he knew. They were living as pagans, and this man was missing something, but he didn't know what it was. The story of this father gives me hope.

Acts 16:23-34 tells us of Christian missionaries Paul and Silas. These men were beaten. Put in jail. In jail they were put in very painful stocks. Not only were they beaten, in jail and stocks, they were also in the deepest, dampest, most insect-infected part of the jail.

An unnamed jailer was

God's Mercy Transforms a Father and His Family (Continued)

charged with keeping Paul and Silas bound until the morning, when town leaders would figure out what to do with these two troublemakers. Exhausted from the day, this jailer napped comfortably knowing that everything was locked down. His life depended upon it. Under Roman law, a jailer was personally responsible for the inmates and would face death if anyone escaped (Acts 12:19).

Despite all the pain and discouragement, Paul and Silas continued to pray. They found that God was still worthy of praise even in the deepest recesses of prison. As Paul and Silas prayed, God sent an earthquake. Chains and doors attached to walls fell off and flew open. Upon looking at the jail, the jailor assumed the worst, and knowing death was his fate, he decided to take his own life.

But Paul cried out, *"Do yourself no harm, for we are all here"* (v28). Maybe the other prisoners were waiting for him to kill himself before making a break for it. The truth is, we don't know why they remained in the jail, but they did. Paul looked out in

love at the man who had put him in stocks, and Paul saved his life.

God did not send this earthquake to free Paul and Silas from prison. God sent this earthquake to free this jailer from his spiritual prison. The jailer went on to secure the other prisoners, and he brought Paul and Silas into his home. Remembering the words of a demon-possessed girl, *"These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation"* (Acts 16:17), the jailer asked them, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* (Acts 16:30).

With the jailer's family gathered, Paul stated, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household"* (Acts 16:31). This jailer learned that it is in "believing" and not "doing" that saves us.

The grace of God took what could have been a suicide and made it into a moment of reconciliation with God. A moment that transformed the trajectory of a family. A moment that, 2,000 years later, we can look at and see how God can move in the most dire of

circumstances.

The main points of this true story are the grace and mercy of God and His divine intervention for those He loves. This man and his family were no longer pagans, but believers in the risen Jesus.

When Jesus calls to you from unexpected places, listen to Him, receive His grace, and as He transforms you, allow Him to transform those whom your life touches. If the Philippian jailer hadn't listened to Paul, he would have been found dead, and his family wouldn't have heard the life-giving truth of the Gospel.

What makes this man one of my favorite fathers in the Bible is how he led his household into God's truth, even as he was discovering it himself. In this same way, if God is calling you from an unexpected place to come and know Him, please do. It could save you, your family, and others whom your life touches.



The Rev. Sabian Chaney is pastor of New Life Center in Hays.

What Can We Learn from the Bible's Job as a Father?

Written by:

Dr. Joel Hamme

Most of us have heard of the "patience of Job." The Book of Job in the Bible is rightly considered to deal with the mystery concerning why bad things happen to good people and our faithful response to God in times of extreme tragedy.

An aspect of the story of Job that is seldom examined is Job as a father. He was not only one of the great men of the East, but he was also the father of seven sons and three daughters, all of whom were killed. The circumstance of their deaths is known to the readers of the story, but remained unknown to Job completely throughout the book.

Were Job's children killed because Job was evil? No, Job was vindicated. Were Job's children killed because they were evil? The story does not indicate that they were. They were killed because God gave everything Job had into the hands of The Adversary, although Job never knew that.

What do we learn about Job the father in the Book of

Job?

1. Job was concerned about his adult children's spiritual well being. We learn that Job was concerned, assiduously so, about the spiritual well being of his adult children. Job 1:5 (ESV) reads, *"And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send for and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, 'It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.'"* This Job did continually.

2. Job mourned when he was robbed of his children. When Job's children were taken from him, he mourned, but also worshiped (Job 1:20). Job understood that all he had, including his children, were from God, and that God could give and take as he saw fit. Now this is a point of contention in interpretation. Was Job right in his ascribing the death of his children to the Lord's work, or is Job wrong? I think the former, but like in much of life, Job never fully knows why things happen.

3. Job desired to question God, but God questions him. In much of the book, Job questions God concerning the evil that has befallen him. As the dialogue with his three friends that dominates much of the book heats up and winds to a close (Job 4-27), Job is more confident that he will get a chance to appear before God and question him. This, however, does not materialize.

God does appear to Job in the whirlwind (Job 38-41) and instead questions him and helps Job to realize Job's place in the scheme of things. Job 38:1-3 (ESV) reads, *"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, 'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.'"*

In the rest of Job 38-41, God shows Job God's wisdom and power in the governance of creation, and Job learns that the workings of God are beyond him.

4. Job was restored. In the end, God restores Job and rebukes his friends, who,

What Can We Learn from the Bible's Job (Continued)

unlike Job, did not say what is right about God (Job 42:1-6). God restores Job's wealth and family. Job splits his inheritance between his sons and daughters, very rare in the ancient world, and lives for another 140 years.

In his book "Character in

Crisis," a book dealing with character formation in Hebrew Wisdom Literature, William Brown writes that Job, through his experience, learns to rely less on his own righteousness and more on the grace of God, a lesson that we can all learn.



Dr. Joel Hamme, Ph.D. is a professor in Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Religion at several Bible colleges, seminaries and universities. He is also a part-time sales associate at Home Depot and attends New Life Center Church in Hays.

'Doubting Thomas' Shows Us Doubt Is Not Always Bad

Written by:
Cheryl Glassman

"Doubt is uncertainty; faith is belief." This statement comes from a definition of the word "doubt." Doubt is not always a bad thing. Doubt can create an opportunity to learn, to renew, to increase one's faith. When thinking about fathers or father figures, I am sure they all experienced a period of doubt, in particular those we have come to know within the pages of the Bible. And, in essence, most people in the Bible could be construed to be mothers or fathers for Christian believers. That is why I have chosen to write about one of my favorite "father figures"--

"Doubting" Thomas.

I have always felt a little sorry for Thomas. Thomas seems to have been known primarily for doubting Jesus' resurrection and subsequent appearance to the apostles, since Thomas was not present at the time Jesus appeared. He is called "Doubting Thomas." Wow! Think about it. ONE time he speaks up in a negative manner, and forever he is called "Doubting Thomas." I mean, it would have been a bit disconcerting to Thomas, but I still wonder. If all the other apostles said they saw Jesus, why would Thomas say he did not believe it? He could have just kept his opinion to himself, but it

leads me to believe there was a deeper reason why he spoke.

Thomas is mentioned in three Gospel stories. Each time he speaks, he either questions or seems to doubt. Or...does he? I believe his step-back contemplation has purpose for each of us.

One example is found in John 11:8. Jesus wants to go back to Judea to comfort the family of his friend Lazarus. None of Jesus' followers wants to go: "*Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you, and you want to go back there?*"

Yet Thomas said to the other disciples, "*Let us also*

The Woman at the Well Simply Shares Her Faith (Continued)

go to die with him." So here's Thomas, causing a stir. I think Thomas' statement is not necessarily a sarcastic one, as some might believe, but rather an admission of belief, trust, and love. He has come to the conclusion that he will follow Jesus, and should Jesus die, Thomas wants to die with him. And, had the disciples not gone back with Jesus, we would not have the words of the magnificent story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Thanks, Thomas!

Next, in John 14:5, Jesus tells the disciples at the Last Supper that he is going away and is going to prepare a place for them. Thomas says, "Master, where are you going; how can we know the way?" And then Jesus answers him with one of the most profound statements in the Bible: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through

me." Thomas wants to understand! He is not doubting; he is striving to understand and responds as an honest sincere believer.

Finally, in John 20:19-31, we read the story of the day Jesus appeared to the disciples following his resurrection, and Thomas was not among them. Thomas doubted the words of those he had spent so much time with when they told him Jesus had appeared to them. If Thomas had not spoken up, the words of Jesus, "Blessed are those who have not seen me but still believe" might never have been spoken--words that strengthen and reaffirm all believers.

From the homily of one of my favorite "fathers," Father Earl Befort, came these words: "St. Gregory said, 'We must face our doubts if our faith is to grow.' Thomas gives us hope when we don't feel worthy."

Should Thomas be known as "Doubting Thomas?" Maybe--if that helps non-believers and believers alike to face their own doubts. So, Thomas is a father of sorts of the church. His contemplation, his ability to speak up when he needed to, and his ability to grow in faith have always been a place to turn when we need spiritual strength. Thomas faced his doubts. He grew in faith and love.

Our God is always there, loving us and nurturing us if we take the time to listen to the words of Jesus and our Biblical "fathers," who teach us how to live in the image of Jesus. May we all face our trials and doubts with the depth of love and conviction shown by "Doubting" Thomas.



Cheryl Glassman is the Minister of Music at St. Nicolas of Myra Catholic Church in Hays.

Being a godly father requires much perseverance and prayer as we seek God's guidance in being the types of fathers He wants us to be. — Jonathan Falwell