What will happen to my father? *February 2007 St. Ansgars Lutheran Church "LINK"*

Matthew 9:1-2 And after getting into a boat he crossed the sea and came to his own town. 2 And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. ***When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."***

Mark 9:23-24 Jesus said to him, "If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes."
24 Immediately the father of the child cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief!"

Marge came out of her father's hospital room. Without looking or paying attention she entered the elevator and pushed the main floor button. She walked out the door not noticing the people coming and going. Marge was upset and preoccupied. Her father was dying. He had inoperable cancer. That, of course, bothered her but what really worried her was his faith.

Sol, like many men, was a man of few words. He didn't talk much about sports, weather, even family. He just wasn't a talkative guy. Marge knew this and for most of her life it didn't bother her. Even though Sol didn't say much he let his family know he loved them. Marge always said, "Nothing says love like one of Dad's hugs". Usually his silence didn't bother her but now it did. As she watched him go through what no doubt were his final days, she worried about his salvation. What did Dad believe?

Sol didn't go to church very much. He went Christmas and Easter and for confirmations, baptisms, weddings and funerals but he wasn't an every Sunday Church go-er. Marge had always believed he had faith and attributed his lack of church attendance to his quietness, not putting himself in situations where he would have to talk. But now, with his days numbered, she worried, "What will become of Dad?"

Many people are concerned about their loved ones' faith because they love them. Sometimes parents worry about their children's faith; children worry about their parents or brothers and sisters and friends.

Faith in Jesus Christ is a very important thing, a wonderful thing. It gives us life and hope and joy. However, let us not fall into the enemy's trap of losing our faith when we are concerned for others. If we believe that Jesus' love and forgiveness and life everlasting is for us, which we do, then why are we worrying about our loved ones? Don't we believe that Jesus' love is unconditional? Don't we believe that he died for us while we were yet sinners? Why do we fail to believe that this same love and forgiveness is also for our friend, brother, sister, daughter, son, mother or father?

It's not that we should do nothing or can do nothing; after all, we have the example above of those men carrying their friend to Jesus. The paralytic could not make it to Jesus on his own. His friends carry him and he received forgiveness and healing. When Jesus sees ***their faith,*** he forgives the paralytic's sins.

Remember, your loved one may have given up on Jesus. They may not even believe in Jesus right now. There are times when people just can't bring themselves to pray to ask Jesus for help. We need to remember that Jesus hasn't given up and still believes in them. **It may be that they need us to carry them to Jesus, to pray when they can't.** At times the best we can manage is the same as the father who is fighting for his child's life.

“I believe Lord, help my unbelief.”

Marge fell on her knees at the foot of her bed. She was sad and mad and scared. All she could think of was to pray. With tears streaming down her cheeks she prayed, “Dear Jesus ,you know I am so scared. I love my Dad so much but I don’t know what Dad believes. What am I going to do? Jesus, I need your help. Dad needs help. I don’t know what to do. Her head fell against her bed. She stayed there leaning against her bed for a long time. She didn’t see any neon lights or hear any voices but as she stood up, went into the bathroom, and washed her face; somehow she knew she didn’t have to worry. She still was sad but she was not without hope.