

Faith-Sized Requests

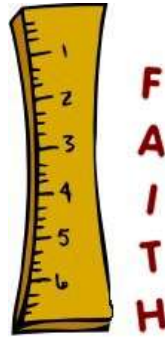
Jim Elliff

Few things are as fixed as mountains. But, on the day after Jesus cursed the fig tree, He declared that they *can* be moved.

“Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him.” (Mark 11:23)

Did Jesus mean this?

The writer of Hebrews thought so. He records that by faith men “conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight, women received back their dead by resurrection . . .” (Hebrews 11:33-35)



Through the right kind of praying, something moves. Faith is the divinely-granted instrument that brings God’s infinite strength to bear on the resistant mountains of our lives.

Jesus did not mean that we are to always “say to the mountain,” though direct speech toward a personified object may seem quite reasonable at times. Once, my wife and I rebuked the fever of our one year-old child when we knew that an escalating fever would cause a third major seizure. In under five seconds the high fever left and he never had this problem again! But we have not done that often.

Rather, Jesus tells us that, most often, prayers are the wings for our faith. He follows His mountain-moving promise with this:

“Therefore I say to you [bringing the principle home to the everyday experience of the believer], all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.” (Mark 11:24)

The problem word in this passage is “all.” “*All* things for which you pray and ask.” This means that we should aim at praying with faith every time we request anything from our Father.

If this is so, then our prayers need to become “faith-sized.” This concept is not original with me. Years ago Rosalind Rinker¹ used this term to describe the bite-sized praying that would allow us to pray more often with faith. Praying out of our range of faith causes our prayers to become tiresome and sadly unfruitful. It would be more reasonable, she taught us, to reduce our prayers into smaller “believing” requests, so that our faith would build and our joy for answered prayer would return.

If you cannot have faith that your son will be saved, you might pray that you can have just one civil conversation with him. After that, you can ask for more. If you cannot trust God for your whole financial debt to be removed, you can pray that you will be allowed to reduce it by an extra \$50 this month. Stretch out and ask our powerful God up to your current level of faith. We know what God *can* do, but what will you believe He *will* do?

Keep a journal of your answered prayers. Include the date, faith-sized request, a spot for the answer and for the date of the answer. Do this because you need to have more consciousness of answered prayer and more joy as a result. You need to see with your eyes that your faith is growing. And, you have an opportunity to leave a legacy of answered prayer that will encourage your family and others. God will be honored. Who knows, by the end of even a week or two you may be able to point to ten answered prayers! Would that change your prayer life?

If you could convince your family or your small group, or even your whole church, to ask and record faith-sized requests, who knows what eternal good would come of it!

Once a missionary told me about what he called “Quechi dynamite.” When the Quechi Indians of Mexico wish to break a huge rock, they find a tiny crack in the stone and slowly drip water into it. Little by little the crack grows until the once unyielding rock finally snaps in two. Take your faith seriously, but apply it in a way that works for your level of trust. You will be amazed how rocks will split and mountains will move.

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¹ Rosalind Rinker, *Prayer, Conversing with God* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Books, 1959) pp. 59-63.