



Maybe You Don't Ask Enough

What Is Your Faith Like?

Over the past eight years I have accumulated well over four hundred prayer requests from various people, some from the church and others from people I have only known briefly. More than a hundred of the requests I have seen God answer and some I have prayed for each day for almost a decade now. Because nearly all of these requests are from people asking me directly to pray for them, I pray daily for God to grant them. I must admit that at times I think about taking some of the requests off my list because I may never in this life see the ones who passed them along to me...never find out if they got what they asked. I don't think of praying as a burden and never as a waste of time but simply the small part I play in God's kingdom. I often wonder though what God thinks of my praying and if I measure up to the task. You might have the same question. Does it matter how much you pray and is there any way your praying could be more effective?

The Apostle Paul, who was an expert on prayer, in particular Christian prayer, made this comment. **Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.** (Ephesians 3:20-21 NIV) At first glance, this may not seem to be addressing the issue of praying, that it is actually prayer itself yet look closely at what is being said. We are told of God that He can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. This is odd in a sense because when we consider God, we tend to see Him as boundless in His power, or we think we do. Plenty don't give much thought to God at all and many others are pretty convinced He can't do much of anything. You, however, may be among those who have great confidence in the Lord and His almost limitless abilities. So, you may not see yourself as one who is not aware of how much God can do but probably, you are. Most likely, nearly the entire Church is in this same boat. Let me explain.

Paul uses a great expression to describe God's power. "Immeasurably". The Greek term it translates means beyond all measure, super abundant. It speaks of above....that whatever you think the LORD can do, its far more than that. It's like having an idea that a seventy pound pre-teen can toss a baseball past a telephone pole and then watching as she chucks it into the next state. Paul implies that we really have no idea how much God can do! Because we have too small a view of God, it hinders our praying. There are two ways we see this lack of comprehension regarding God and His power. The first is in how we ask and what it is we ask of God. Paul says that God can do an immeasurable amount more than we ever ask, than we continually ask. The implication is that we never get it right when it comes to God's abilities; we are always off base on it which is why we ask for so little from God. You might think you ask too much of Him but Paul says the opposite is the case. You never ask enough.

The same is true of our imagination. We are impoverished in our thoughts about God. However we see Him in our minds, it is inadequate. You always fall short in your thinking of how powerful He is. God did a little object lesson with the faithful Abraham who needed some help realizing just how great God is. Before

he was Abraham (father of many), he was only Abram (exalted father). God came to Abram in a vision. **Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.** But Abram said, **"O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"** And Abram said, **"You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."** (Genesis 15:1-3 NIV) Abram's view of God was too small and he could not imagine what the Lord was able to do to upgrade his life. God took Abram outside and had him look up at the stars. With his eyes gazing upward into the night sky, the Lord made Abram an amazing promise. **"Look up at the heavens and count the stars — if indeed you can count them."** Then he said to him, **"So shall your offspring be."** (Genesis 15:5 NIV) With the magnificence of the stars filling his imagination and inspiring his thoughts of God, Abram amazingly believed this promise of God and saw the power of the Lord in an all new way. His offspring, because of God, would be numerous like the stars in the sky.

There is a fascinating account of Jesus and a broken hearted father whose son suffered from horrific seizures and was despite being old enough, unable to speak. The dad told Jesus the child's condition was due to demon possession and Jesus when he saw the boy agreed. The Disciples had tried to cast the evil spirit out of the son but failed miserably at the attempt. In front of Jesus, the evil spirit threw the boy down to the ground where the boy uncontrollably rolled around and foamed at the mouth. Jesus asked the dad how long his son had been like this and he told him it had been since the boy was a young child. The father went on. **"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."** (Mark 9:22 NIV) Jesus was not particularly enamored with the father's doubts. **"If you can'?"** said Jesus. **"Everything is possible for him who believes."** (Mark 9:23 NIV)

Is that not how it is with nearly all of us? Do you live with a faith in Christ that is seasoned heavily in doubt? Have you prayed like this dad? "If you can do anything..." We call that normal praying. Jesus sees it as unbelief. Imagine asking the best mechanic in the world if he has the expertise to change your windshield wipers or a master surgeon if she's got the skill set for clipping your toenails. It is bizarre, the way we approach God with our requests and yet we all do it, we all have this question mark lingering even as we are praying. It seems like what Christianity should be because it is so universal, this way of thinking of God.

I recently heard the testimony of a young woman who has been a Christian just four years. When she first came to faith in Christ, she had been working as a model in Miami and just recently moved to L.A. to begin a career in Hollywood. She had lived the wild-life in Miami...partying and sleeping around. When she settled in L.A., Brittany had become disillusioned with the party life and sought out God. It was as she was born-again that this young Christian was challenged to not only give up the drugs and alcohol, but she was also compelled to become sexually pure until she got married. She had no power within herself to live up to this new standard of living and frankly, she didn't see how it could be possible to do so. Throwing herself on God and His power, Brittany just started this new stage in her life. Some days it was a real struggle for her. There were temptations that were beyond her power to withstand. But in this four year movement into sexual purity, Brittany discovered that Christ was much bigger than she had ever thought.

We have an obligation to Christ and the salvation He has brought us to expand the box of our faith and begin trusting Him more than ever. What prayer request do you have that is so audacious you would be embarrassed to share it with your non-Christian friends? Could you bring that to God? The great question you face that must be answered is, "Can God...?" Don't worry about the will He part. Just decide in your heart if He can. Then if you have concluded He can, bring your three big concerns you have and put them on a piece of paper and make them have a prominent place where you can see them, mull them over, let Christ have them. Pray with however much fervency and decisiveness He places in you and see what happens. Jesus has this for you just like He did the troubled father. "Do you believe I can do it?" This may be the most important question you will answer this year. The father's response changed the course of his life and yours may change your life too just as dramatically. Do you believe Jesus can do it? What do you say?

