

NBC Devotional
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Almost Mustard Seed Faith

Faith is at the center of all Christian concepts. It's a subject that is mentioned in the Old and New testament at least 391 times. The last two years of my life could be titled cancer, covid, and controversy. It has been a time when I needed faith more than ever. The apostles said to Jesus in Luke 17:5-6, "Lord, Increase our faith". Jesus replied to them and said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, "Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea, and it would obey you." (NKJV) In Matthew 17: 19-20 the disciples asked Jesus why they couldn't cast the devil out and He told them, because of your unbelief; for assuredly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you." I've sometimes thought of my faith as "almost" mustard seed faith. After all, I haven't moved any mountains lately or told trees to be pulled up by the roots and thrown in the sea. There are all different kinds of faith that we need to exercise in life. In my journey I can easily divide faith into faith for the beginning, faith for growing up, and Faith to Keep the faith.

When my husband and I first found saving faith, it was in an unlikely place. We were newly married and had no experience with the word salvation. We were both bumping along with no direction, confused kids playing house. Living the hippie life in the late 60's was all supposed to be about peace and love. There was a little love, but not much peace. God sent us to rent a cabin in the Santa Cruz mountains from a very conservative middle-aged couple who loved us into the kingdom. Their faith showed us that we could have faith to believe that Jesus was the way. He could save us and give us a new life, a new beginning. But if we were to continue we would have to keep growing -to grow up in the faith and that required a different kind of faith.

The second phase taught us the way to surrender. Being poor, raising a family and going to school teaches you about yourself. We were so poor that one trip across the bridge to school was 10 cents and we didn't have it. My husband Steve found himself at the toll bridge on his way to Bible school when he realized that he didn't have the 10 cents. He opened the car door at the toll booth, looked down, and found a shiny dime laying in the road. We had four sons in five years. We had little knowledge of how to have a Christian family and were unexperienced in the whole idea of parenting. As a young overwhelmed mother, I can remember praying so many times, "Lord make up the difference!" "Fill in where we don't know how". If God hadn't answered that prayer, we would have all been in trouble. It is not because we are extraordinary it is because God is extraordinary. In the group of our five sons there is a pastor, a missionary, a firefighter paramedic, an educator, and a university leader. They have grown into men that I would like even if they weren't my sons. God made up the difference.

As we grow in our faith and mature, I come to what I see as the third phase; faith to keep The Faith. Romans 1:16-17 says "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written the just shall live by faith. We've all read the stories of the Christians who have seen mighty miracles happen, the sick healed, orphans fed, hundreds of people saved, and wonderful works done in the name of Jesus. I have sometimes wanted to be a superhero for Jesus. For things to seem relevant and to consider myself fervent enough I have asked God to move in a powerful way, and sometimes He does. But faith is more than that. It is the ability to keep believing God in spite of every mountain or bush that we face. It is to believe God and keep going even when we don't understand the why's or have a definite direction. I heard a pastor say one time, "This generation doesn't have enough faith to pray in a hamburger" But I thought to myself, in America today, most of us don't have to pray in a hamburger, they're all around us in our prosperity. My faith battles today are mental and emotional. Keeping faith enough to keep going.

Jude writes, "To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: ...to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." (Jude 1,3 NKJV) To contend means to strive or vie in contest or rivalry or against difficulties: to struggle. Earnestly means to do

something with deep and sincere feeling; So, a Palm paraphrase of that portion of Jude 3 might say, "Even though you are the called out, the sanctified, kept by Jesus, you still need to struggle and put up a fight with all that's in you, for the faith that was once delivered to the saints." I am reminded that it's not about me having this miraculous faith, it's more about what I have faith in. You can have a lot of faith in a rotten log laid over a raging river, and still end up in the water. I never want to just be a nice church lady. It's all too easy to fall into the habit of clean living and church going and lose the vitality and desire of a close walk with God.

Faith is the power of God to salvation, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, and the just lives by faith. Our lives truly are lived from faith to faith, from one faith struggle to the next. Faith is more than seeing great works, it is the glue that holds life together, it is the hope that keeps us going, faith brings us to salvation and gives us the ability to keep going. When we first have the faith to believe and start our journey with God, while we are growing up, and as mature Christians faith changes and has different demands. But even if we only have "almost" mustard seed faith, God has shown me that a little faith goes a long way.

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