

28. Asking Great Things From God

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You, my God, have revealed to your servant that you will build a house for him. So your servant has found courage to pray to you. -- 1 Chronicles 17:25

We must be careful not to measure our success by our size, but we need to remember that God is honored by the size of our requests. We need to ask great things from God, not for selfish reasons, but to serve Him and others better. We need to ask great things, expect great things, and attempt great things to glorify and honor God.

As L'Abri began and grew, Fran and Edith began to ask for greater and greater blessings from God. God led them to pray for a \$1,000.00 down payment to buy their first chalet, Chalet les Mélèzes, so they could stay in Switzerland. And then He taught them to pray for the next step, a second larger payment to close their purchase. After a few years, when God showed them the great need for more effective evangelism and missionary efforts, He taught them to pray for thousands of dollars for more homes, more workers, and more L'Abri fellowships wherever He wanted them. He led them to write their first books to help people with some basic problems, and then they discovered He wanted them to write about how He is Lord over the whole of life, and this required a whole series of books. To reach even greater numbers, He led them to do the film series and books *How Should We Then Live?* and *Whatever Happened To The Human Race?*. And then after Dr. Schaeffer discovered he had cancer in 1978, God empowered Him to write more books about Christ's lordship over human governments and evangelical churches.

Fran and Edith Schaeffer did not begin L'Abri in 1955 by asking God for all these great things, or by asking Him to make them into very important people. After they resolved to follow Him, they simply prayed for God to unfold His plan for their lives. And each year God taught them to pray for greater things until they began reaching many thousands of people through their books and films in places where L'Abri could not go. When we read Edith's letters home, we see that those in L'Abri were constantly expecting great things from God, and God never failed them. But with every prayer by every member, God seemed to stretch them beyond human endurance and intelligence so the work would be truly His work within them and not theirs alone.

God considers it an honor when we ask great things from Him in order to bless more and more people, and He is glorified more and more when He honors these requests. God does not expect us to pray for great things all at once without His leading. He will build our faith by leading us day by day to pray with greater expectations; expectations based upon what He has done with us in the past. Francis and Edith Schaeffer did not pray for greater things for themselves, but always for God to be glorified and more people to be blessed by coming to know the truth. Because they prayed from a heart-felt love for God and others, He could honor their prayers.

As the Schaeffers and others in L'Abri prayed, they also expected and attempted greater things of themselves. The work grew when Fran began traveling to teach the Bible and answer questions rather than stay at home: people who had been saved in their home wanted their friends to hear Fran's teaching. And then the work grew larger when people wanted to come to L'Abri as students--not just guests or helpers--but to study daily and deeply the Scriptures and what Fran was teaching about Christianity and culture. Since they had prayed for God's plan and for God to give the growth, they believed these requests were a part of God's plan and they began Farel House for students. Farel House has grown to be a part of each L'Abri branch, because God showed them that it was worthy of their labors and His blessings. As they prayed for greater and greater things, they also paid the price for these greater things. Writing books and making films required more hours of work than they had ever done before in L'Abri or with Farel House students, and they had to do these greater things while continuing their work in L'Abri and with students. Praying for greater things required them to work hard learning new things daily to keep up with all that God was requiring them to do in answer to their prayers. God did greater and greater things for them in answer to their prayers, but each of these things required more of them. God continued to bless them and others with these greater ministries because they never used God or prayed for greater things so they could do less and less. So, we can see even more clearly why Edith might ask someone who says they want a prayer life like hers, "Are you willing to pay the price of asking great things of God?"

In religious circles, some have taught that anyone can do whatever he really desires; that all of our desires are given by God and God would not give us a desire that we could not fulfill. A little common sense would dispel this notion. Some people no taller than four feet six inches have strongly desired to play professional basketball, but no matter how hard they have worked they have not succeeded. We would do better to teach that if we strongly want God's desires (plans and purposes) for our lives, and if we are willing to follow His desires whatever they may be, then God will show us His desires and empower us to fulfill them. We should also emphasize that many times God will only show us the next small

step, and that we must take the next small step before He will show us His larger plan. Remember, God revealed His plan for L'Abri one day at a time as they prayed.

Rather than teaching that God will fulfill our every desire, we should say that God will fulfill His every promise. David prayed with the faith that God would keep His promise to him and build him a house, and this gave him courage to pray and ask God to keep his promise (1 Chronicles 17:25). But David was also willing to do whatever God required of him to build his house. He did not sit back expecting God to do all while he did nothing. David knew that building his house would be a joint project between God and himself, and that his house would remain strong from generation to generation depending upon the faithfulness and obedience of his descendants--for God was always faithful. God would keep His promises to David, but would David and his descendants fulfill their part? History shows God remained faithful, but many of David's descendants had to be punished for their sins.

We need to rejoice and think about how much God strongly desires to work with us. God enjoys working with His children to accomplish great things. God finds true happiness when His children come to Him and ask Him if they can do something with Him and for Him, and God loves doing all that He wisely can with His children. Our Heavenly Father really does desire to do worthwhile things with each of us. And because He is infinite, He has all the time we need to work with Him. Perhaps the greatest thing we ever do is bring God true happiness by asking to be with Him and work with Him to accomplish His plans. Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for being a real Father to me. Thank you for truly desiring to spend time with me when you have the entire universe to care for. Thank you for stooping down to work with me and teach me what I need to know to help others. Help me treat others, especially my own family, the way you treat me. In Jesus' Name and for His family. Amen.

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