

Small Faith Is Enough **Luke 17:5-10**

Test faith?

As you know, my father was a pastor. While he was a Methodist pastor, his spiritual disposition early in his ministry was more Pentecostal. He had many experiences of healing the sick and casting out evil spirits through prayer. People spoke in tongues when he laid his hands on them and prayed over them. Because of these somewhat special experiences, his faith focused on an experiential dimension of faith when he was young.

He told me that once, he was so moved by the story of Peter walking on water that he wanted to test his faith. He went to a riverbank and prayed until he was certain that he could walk on the river as Peter did. After hours of prayer, he believed he could walk on the river and he stepped into the water. Do you know what happened? He sank under the water. He felt that there must have been a little doubt in his heart so he prayed to God to remove his doubt. After prayer, he was 100% sure that he truly believed that he could walk on water, so he tried again. But as you can guess, he became a better swimmer on that day but he could not walk on the river. He believed... 100% believed, that he could walk on the river... but he couldn't do it. Why couldn't he walk on water? Because of his little faith? No. Because God didn't create human beings in that way and God didn't intend for him to walk on water as a way to test his faith. Walking on water is nothing more than God's grace, so even if he was able to walk on the river on that day, it didn't mean that he had strong faith. Experiencing or performing miracles is not a measure of faith maturity.

Increase our faith?

At the same time, we also know that we are called to mature in faith, so there are levels of maturity in the faith. Some biblical texts mention 'great faith' (Matthew 8:10) and 'little faith' (Matthew 8:26). We know some people with great faith such as Martin Luther King, Jr or Mother Thresa. We know that faith is not static. Rather, faith can be nurtured and grow. Then, how do you measure your faith and cultivate your faith? There is no simple answer to this question.

In today's scripture, the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" Jesus often rebuked his disciples for lack of faith or little faith. Finally, the disciples seemed to get what they really needed, so they requested of Jesus, "Increase our faith!" My initial reactions to the disciples' request were two: "can one's faith be increased by someone else?" and "is faith quantifiable by some means?" What do you think? Do you think that a pastor or your good friend or Jesus can increase your faith? I don't think so. I don't think even Jesus can increase others' faith. Remember that Jesus couldn't do miracles in his hometown because of people's lack of faith! Faith is our response. It is our response to God's invitation of loving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ taught us the way of faith and the essentials for cultivating our faith, but no one can increase our faith because faith is essentially our response to that invitation to new life.

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Faith can be measured, but it cannot be quantified. If you have a business background, I bet that you would like to see a ‘graph’ or progressive chart! But faith can’t be quantified on a line graph. Can you say “oh, I have 25% more faith this year than last year!?” Never! Francisco J. García wrote, “Faith does not increase like magic. It is felt and known through lived experience. This can only come through practice, in those challenging moments when faith is put to the test. I don’t mean “test” in the sense that you pass or fail, but that you move forward with a concrete step in the justice-seeking and peacemaking way of Jesus, with a discerning heart, regardless of uncertainty, worry, or fear.”¹ I think he is right. Faith is an embodied experience of trust in God’s love and response to that love. Just like you train your body over time through constant practice, faith can be refined and matured through practice.

If you had faith the size of a mustard seed...

Responding to the disciples’ request of “more faith,” Jesus said, “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.” While Jesus talked about the size of faith in this text, his point is not about the quantity of faith. Rather he talked about how a seemingly small amount of the right kind of faith is needed to do incredible things! So Jesus was taking quality, not quantity.² I think the Message Bible version is clear. “You don’t need more faith. There is no ‘more’ or ‘less’ in faith. If you have a bare kernel of faith, say the size of a poppy seed, you could say to this sycamore tree, ‘Go jump in the lake,’ and it would do it.”(v. 6 MSG)

“There is no ‘more’ or ‘less’ in faith.” If we have a bare kernel of faith, say the size of a poppy seed, we can do many amazing things! Jesus was reminding his disciples that they already had that amazing faith in them. Faith, the size of a poppy seed! We don’t need more faith to do what God has asked us to do, loving God and loving our neighbors. We already have it! This is good news we often forget. Eric Hanson wrote a poem, “Every Heart’s a Hurricane.” Let me share a part of this poem. “Every heart’s a hurricane, / Each soul a starlit sea, / Every mind’s a meteor / Unbound by gravity... / Every life’s a lightning bolt, / Yet everyone’s told no.” This young poet sings about passion and energy beneath our skin, though the world often says, ‘no.’

Faith is one of the strongest forces that can change our personal lives and the whole world. But we often forget such a remarkable faith is already in us because, under the influence of the capitalistic world, we quantify our faith. We feel that we don’t have enough faith to do incredible things. We feel that we need more faith to carry out the amazing work of God. But remember Jesus’ word. “There is no ‘more’ or ‘less’ in faith.” Let me ask you a couple of

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questions. Do you believe in God the Father? Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?" These three questions are used for baptism, and I believe all of us have already said, "I do" when we receive our baptism. It means all we need is already in us. We already have it and that's enough.

What can we do with this faith? Can we really change the world? The answer is yes! A friend of Mother Teresa from her early days visited her. It had been a long time since they'd seen each other and there was much to talk about. "The friend poured out her frustration that her efforts seemed to make no difference at all to the quality of lives of thousands of poor people. Mother Teresa placed her strong work worn-hands on her and said, "We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But if the drop was not in the ocean, I think the ocean would be less because of the missing drop." But her friend challenged her that there must be bigger and better ways of helping the poor. Mother Teresa answered, "I do not agree with a big way of doing things. What matters is the individual. If we wait til we get numbers, then we will be lost in the numbers and we will never be able to show that love and respect for the person."³ Faith is a way to overcome the overwhelming power of numbers. Mother Teresa once said, "If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one." "The miracle is not that we do this work, but that we are happy to do it." What enabled her to do such an incredible ministry is a small faith in God's great love. She served small people with that great love and left a huge impact on the world.

My friend, Faith is faith. "There is no 'more' or 'less' in faith." Don't think that "I need more faith to do this and to do that for God!" No! All we need is faith in Christ and that faith is already in us. With that faith, no matter how small it is, we can make a difference. In fact, we are making a difference by serving our neighbors. What we do seems small but still we make a change in our world. So don't think that your faith is not enough. Don't be discouraged. that we cannot feed a hundred people or change the world all at once. With faith, keep doing your good work and God will finish God's work. Amen.

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My friend, Faith is faith. "There is no 'more' or 'less' in faith." Don't think that "I need more faith to do this and to do that for God!" No! All we need is faith in Christ and that faith is already in us. With that faith, no matter how small it is, we can make a difference. In fact, we are making a difference by serving our neighbors. What we do seems small but still we make a change in our world. So don't think that your faith is not enough. Don't be discouraged. that we cannot feed a hundred people or change the world all at once. With faith, keep doing your good work and God will finish God's work. Amen.

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Small Faith Is Enough **Luke 17:5-10**

Test faith?

As you know, my father was a pastor. While he was a Methodist pastor, his spiritual disposition early in his ministry was more Pentecostal. He had many experiences of healing the sick and casting out evil spirits through prayer. People spoke in tongues when he laid his hands on them and prayed over them. Because of these somewhat special experiences, his faith focused on an experiential dimension of faith when he was young.

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Test faith?

As you know, my father was a pastor. While he was a Methodist pastor, his spiritual disposition early in his ministry was more Pentecostal. He had many experiences of healing the sick and casting out evil spirits through prayer. People spoke in tongues when he laid his hands on them and prayed over them. Because of these somewhat special experiences, his faith focused on an experiential dimension of faith when he was young.

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What can we do with this faith? Can we really change the world? The answer is yes! A friend of Mother Teresa from her early days visited her. It had been a long time since they'd seen each other and there was much to talk about. "The friend poured out her frustration that her efforts seemed to make no difference at all to the quality of lives of thousands of poor people. Mother Teresa placed her strong work worn-hands on her and said, "We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But if the drop was not in the ocean, I think the ocean would be less because of the missing drop." But her friend challenged her that there must be bigger and better ways of helping the poor. Mother Teresa answered, "I do not agree with a big way of doing things. What matters is the individual. If we wait til we get numbers, then we will be lost in the numbers and we will never be able to show that love and respect for the person."³ Faith is a way to overcome the overwhelming power of numbers. Mother Teresa once said, "If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one." "The miracle is not that we do this work, but that we are happy to do it." What enabled her to do such an incredible ministry is a small faith in God's great love. She served small people with that great love and left a huge impact on the world.

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Small Faith Is Enough **Luke 17:5-10**

Test faith?

As you know, my father was a pastor. While he was a Methodist pastor, his spiritual disposition early in his ministry was more Pentecostal. He had many experiences of healing the sick and casting out evil spirits through prayer. People spoke in tongues when he laid his hands on them and prayed over them. Because of these somewhat special experiences, his faith focused on an experiential dimension of faith when he was young.

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Increase our faith?

At the same time, we also know that we are called to mature in faith, so there are levels of maturity in the faith. Some biblical texts mention 'great faith' (Matthew 8:10) and 'little faith' (Matthew 8:26). We know some people with great faith such as Martin Luther King, Jr or Mother Thresa. We know that faith is not static. Rather, faith can be nurtured and grow. Then, how do you measure your faith and cultivate your faith? There is no simple answer to this question.

In today's scripture, the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" Jesus often rebuked his disciples for lack of faith or little faith. Finally, the disciples seemed to get what they really needed, so they requested of Jesus, "Increase our faith!" My initial reactions to the disciples' request were two: "can one's faith be increased by someone else?" and "is faith quantifiable by some means?" What do you think? Do you think that a pastor or your good friend or Jesus can increase your faith? I don't think so. I don't think even Jesus can increase others' faith. Remember that Jesus couldn't do miracles in his hometown because of people's lack of faith! Faith is our response. It is our response to God's invitation of loving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ taught us the way of faith and the essentials for cultivating our faith, but no one can increase our faith because faith is essentially our response to that invitation to new life.

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Responding to the disciples’ request of “more faith,” Jesus said, “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.” While Jesus talked about the size of faith in this text, his point is not about the quantity of faith. Rather he talked about how a seemingly small amount of the right kind of faith is needed to do incredible things! So Jesus was taking quality, not quantity.² I think the Message Bible version is clear. “You don’t need more faith. There is no ‘more’ or ‘less’ in faith. If you have a bare kernel of faith, say the size of a poppy seed, you could say to this sycamore tree, ‘Go jump in the lake,’ and it would do it.”(v. 6 MSG)

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What can we do with this faith? Can we really change the world? The answer is yes! A friend of Mother Teresa from her early days visited her. It had been a long time since they'd seen each other and there was much to talk about. "The friend poured out her frustration that her efforts seemed to make no difference at all to the quality of lives of thousands of poor people. Mother Teresa placed her strong work worn-hands on her and said, "We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But if the drop was not in the ocean, I think the ocean would be less because of the missing drop." But her friend challenged her that there must be bigger and better ways of helping the poor. Mother Teresa answered, "I do not agree with a big way of doing things. What matters is the individual. If we wait til we get numbers, then we will be lost in the numbers and we will never be able to show that love and respect for the person."³ Faith is a way to overcome the overwhelming power of numbers. Mother Teresa once said, "If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one." "The miracle is not that we do this work, but that we are happy to do it." What enabled her to do such an incredible ministry is a small faith in God's great love. She served small people with that great love and left a huge impact on the world.

My friend, Faith is faith. "There is no 'more' or 'less' in faith." Don't think that "I need more faith to do this and to do that for God!" No! All we need is faith in Christ and that faith is already in us. With that faith, no matter how small it is, we can make a difference. In fact, we are making a difference by serving our neighbors. What we do seems small but still we make a change in our world. So don't think that your faith is not enough. Don't be discouraged. that we cannot feed a hundred people or change the world all at once. With faith, keep doing your good work and God will finish God's work. Amen.

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My friend, Faith is faith. "There is no 'more' or 'less' in faith." Don't think that "I need more faith to do this and to do that for God!" No! All we need is faith in Christ and that faith is already in us. With that faith, no matter how small it is, we can make a difference. In fact, we are making a difference by serving our neighbors. What we do seems small but still we make a change in our world. So don't think that your faith is not enough. Don't be discouraged. that we cannot feed a hundred people or change the world all at once. With faith, keep doing your good work and God will finish God's work. Amen.

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Small Faith Is Enough **Luke 17:5-10**

Test faith?

As you know, my father was a pastor. While he was a Methodist pastor, his spiritual disposition early in his ministry was more Pentecostal. He had many experiences of healing the sick and casting out evil spirits through prayer. People spoke in tongues when he laid his hands on them and prayed over them. Because of these somewhat special experiences, his faith focused on an experiential dimension of faith when he was young.

He told me that once, he was so moved by the story of Peter walking on water that he wanted to test his faith. He went to a riverbank and prayed until he was certain that he could walk on the river as Peter did. After hours of prayer, he believed he could walk on the river and he stepped into the water. Do you know what happened? He sank under the water. He felt that there must have been a little doubt in his heart so he prayed to God to remove his doubt. After prayer, he was 100% sure that he truly believed that he could walk on water, so he tried again. But as you can guess, he became a better swimmer on that day but he could not walk on the river. He believed... 100% believed, that he could walk on the river... but he couldn't do it. Why couldn't he walk on water? Because of his little faith? No. Because God didn't create human beings in that way and God didn't intend for him to walk on water as a way to test his faith. Walking on water is nothing more than God's grace, so even if he was able to walk on the river on that day, it didn't mean that he had strong faith. Experiencing or performing miracles is not a measure of faith maturity.

Increase our faith?

At the same time, we also know that we are called to mature in faith, so there are levels of maturity in the faith. Some biblical texts mention 'great faith' (Matthew 8:10) and 'little faith' (Matthew 8:26). We know some people with great faith such as Martin Luther King, Jr or Mother Thresa. We know that faith is not static. Rather, faith can be nurtured and grow. Then, how do you measure your faith and cultivate your faith? There is no simple answer to this question.

In today's scripture, the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" Jesus often rebuked his disciples for lack of faith or little faith. Finally, the disciples seemed to get what they really needed, so they requested of Jesus, "Increase our faith!" My initial reactions to the disciples' request were two: "can one's faith be increased by someone else?" and "is faith quantifiable by some means?" What do you think? Do you think that a pastor or your good friend or Jesus can increase your faith? I don't think so. I don't think even Jesus can increase others' faith. Remember that Jesus couldn't do miracles in his hometown because of people's lack of faith! Faith is our response. It is our response to God's invitation of loving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ taught us the way of faith and the essentials for cultivating our faith, but no one can increase our faith because faith is essentially our response to that invitation to new life.

When Juhee and I moved to Rhode Island, one of our challenges was finding a reliable auto repair shop. A year after we moved to Rhode Island, the front tires of my SUV needed to be replaced so Juhee and I went to an auto shop. I don't remember the exact price, but an initial estimate for the two tires was about \$300. After the mechanic inspected my car, he recommended changing all four tires because all of them were worn, so we asked for a new

estimate for four tires. Do you know how much it was? It was about \$900! 2 for \$300 and 4 for \$900?? Does that make sense? I am bad at math but I do know the basic calculation. So we demanded an explanation and then, the clerk suddenly changed his word and said that “you can get cheaper tires” and gave us a new estimate, which was about \$600. We had to change tires anyway so we did it, but Juhee and I struggled with the question, “would they properly and honestly change them?” Because we have had many bad experiences with auto shops, we are generally suspicious of any suggestions from them. Can reliable auto mechanics increase our trust in them? Through good services over time, I may be able to gradually come to trust them, but trusting them is still my response to their work. Likewise, no one can increase our faith. In this sense, what disciples were asking was the wrong thing.

Faith can be measured, but it cannot be quantified. If you have a business background, I bet that you would like to see a ‘graph’ or progressive chart! But faith can’t be quantified on a line graph. Can you say “oh, I have 25% more faith this year than last year!?” Never! Francisco J. García wrote, “Faith does not increase like magic. It is felt and known through lived experience. This can only come through practice, in those challenging moments when faith is put to the test. I don’t mean “test” in the sense that you pass or fail, but that you move forward with a concrete step in the justice-seeking and peacemaking way of Jesus, with a discerning heart, regardless of uncertainty, worry, or fear.”¹ I think he is right. Faith is an embodied experience of trust in God’s love and response to that love. Just like you train your body over time through constant practice, faith can be refined and matured through practice.

If you had faith the size of a mustard seed...

Responding to the disciples’ request of “more faith,” Jesus said, “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.” While Jesus talked about the size of faith in this text, his point is not about the quantity of faith. Rather he talked about how a seemingly small amount of the right kind of faith is needed to do incredible things! So Jesus was taking quality, not quantity.² I think the Message Bible version is clear. “You don’t need more faith. There is no ‘more’ or ‘less’ in faith. If you have a bare kernel of faith, say the size of a poppy seed, you could say to this sycamore tree, ‘Go jump in the lake,’ and it would do it.”(v. 6 MSG)

“There is no ‘more’ or ‘less’ in faith.” If we have a bare kernel of faith, say the size of a poppy seed, we can do many amazing things! Jesus was reminding his disciples that they already had that amazing faith in them. Faith, the size of a poppy seed! We don’t need more faith to do what God has asked us to do, loving God and loving our neighbors. We already have it! This is good news we often forget. Eric Hanson wrote a poem, “Every Heart’s a Hurricane.” Let me share a part of this poem. “Every heart’s a hurricane, / Each soul a starlit sea, / Every mind’s a meteor / Unbound by gravity... / Every life’s a lightning bolt, / Yet everyone’s told no.” This young poet sings about passion and energy beneath our skin, though the world often says, ‘no.’

Faith is one of the strongest forces that can change our personal lives and the whole world. But we often forget such a remarkable faith is already in us because, under the influence of the capitalistic world, we quantify our faith. We feel that we don’t have enough faith to do incredible things. We feel that we need more faith to carry out the amazing work of God. But remember Jesus’ word. “There is no ‘more’ or ‘less’ in faith.” Let me ask you a couple of

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