

Daniel Kolenda: How to Overcome Unbelief

It's true that some people have more of a measure of faith than others. Some have faith like an apple seed. Some have faith like a peach pit. And some people have the smallest measure of faith—like a mustard seed.

But it doesn't really matter much because even if you have mustard seed faith, you still have enough to move mountains! So then some may ask, "What is the problem? Why haven't I seen the mountains in my own life moving out of my way?"

Let us consider the context of the verse where Jesus talked about mountain-moving faith. The story is found in Matthew 17:14-21. A certain man with a demon-possessed son had come to Jesus' disciples for help, but when they could not cast out the evil spirits, they asked Jesus why they had been so unsuccessful. He said to them, "Because of your unbelief" (v. 20).

This is a very clear and precise explanation that Jesus reiterated by going on to say, "For verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (v. 20). So far this seems very straightforward. But the simplicity and clarity of this statement is often overshadowed by confusion over the next words Jesus spoke: "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (v. 21).

It almost sounds as if Jesus contradicted Himself. When asked why the disciples had not been able to exorcize the demon, He said it was because of unbelief. But now He seems to be saying that it is because they had not fasted and prayed enough. Which is it?

The confusion comes when we fail to realize the moral of the story. At first glance it may appear that the demon is the focal point of this account, but a closer look will reveal that the real antagonist in this story is not the demon but the spirit of unbelief. The disciples were concerned about the demon inside the boy, but Jesus was concerned about the unbelief inside His disciples. The disciples' question was about casting out demons, but Jesus's answer was about casting out doubt. Jesus knew that once unbelief has been cast out, exorcizing demons would be a piece of cake.

Sometimes we have to pray long prayers and fast for many days before we get the victory, but it is not because our appeals coerce God into doing something. And it is not because we have finally earned the answer to our prayers by logging enough credit hours into our spiritual bank account.

Much fasting and prayer may be necessary and useful in helping us gain victory over our own stubborn flesh and cast out the spirit of unbelief that blocks God's power from flowing through us. It is this kind of *unbelief* that goes out only "by prayer and fasting. It is also worth mentioning that some manuscripts do not contain the statement about prayer and fasting at all, which is why many Bible translations have left it out completely. Any way you look at it, faith is the key to powerful prayer. This is the point Jesus made in this story.

In Matthew 9:25, when Jairus's daughter died, Jesus had to send everyone out of the room before He could raise her from the dead. Why didn't He allow all those scornful skeptics to see the miracle with their own eyes? Because He had to cast the unbelief out.

Peter did the same thing in Acts 9:40: "But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, 'Tabitha, arise.' And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up" (NAS). Jesus taught His disciples a lesson: Cast the spirit of unbelief out, and nothing will be

able to stand against you. Demons, death, and even the most formidable mountains will obey your command.

Investors often “diversify” their investments because if one venture doesn’t work out, they want to have something else to fall back on. So a common idiom in the business world is, “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.” That means, don’t put all your resources into one investment because if one of your “baskets” breaks and all your “eggs” are in it, you will lose everything.

You see, if you are holding back some of your “eggs,” it means you are not 100 percent confident that a particular basket will hold. You may be 50 percent confident or even 99 percent confident, but that small percentage of apprehension is what I am calling “unbelief.” So how do you know when you’ve gotten rid of all the unbelief? When you’ve put all of your eggs into God’s basket.

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