

How You Can Make God Smile

My husband, Mark, had just returned from a 2011 Global Awakening conference in Pennsylvania. As he unpacked his suitcase, he told me of an amazing couple he had met. Mark traveled with Randy Clark in the early '90s and met all kinds of awesome people from around the world. I was happy for him then but felt his connections at that time had little to do with me. That was until he showed me the website of this couple.

The Holy Spirit had powerfully touched Mike and Deena Van't Hul when Randy prayed for them at a conference in 2000. In 2005 Mike and Deena moved their family to China and began to take in disabled orphans. They renovated an abandoned elementary school in Fuzhou China and opened Hidden Treasures Home. As I looked at the pictures of their beautiful children on the Loaves and Fishes International website, tears flowed freely down my face. I said out loud, "I want to go there."

It was now 2013, and we found ourselves holding orphaned babies halfway around the world in the place we had dreamt of. We pinched ourselves to be sure it was true. God had made a way for us to go. We held babies, wrestled with toddlers, played games, sang in Donald Duck voices, worshipped and prayed. Some of the children were unable to speak, some unable to walk, some autistic and some blind. I spent 20 years teaching children with severe physical and mental disabilities in the public school system, so the joy that comes from being with children such as these was very familiar to us. The difference was that Jesus was at the center of everything this orphanage did.

The Purest of Prayers

One day after morning circle time, a young boy in the classroom asked the teacher's assistant a question in Chinese.

The assistant was able to speak English and she approached Mark. "An Fu wants to know if he can pray for your arm."

To understand his request, it's important to know that Mark was born with a partially formed left shoulder and arm, and only a small bud for a hand. Though he's lived a completely normal life and his disability has never kept him from living his life to the fullest, still we have spent more than 20 years waiting for his physical healing from God. We've received multiple prophetic words about this healing, many of which came through complete strangers. Mark has had the amazing privilege of praying for and seeing many healings take place all over the world. He has witnessed blind eyes regaining sight, deaf ears opening and weak limbs strengthening. Though we've stood on the Lord's promises, we've also had to walk through seasons of deep disappointment and grief.

So when this precious young boy asked to pray for Mark, we were pleasantly surprised. Of course we were happy to have him pray! Without hesitation or reservation, An Fu made his way toward Mark on bent legs that made it difficult for him to walk. He held Mark's small arm in both of his hands and prayed these words in very clear English: "Jesus, Jesus—arm, hand, grow; arm, hand, grow. Jesus, heal. Jesus, heal. Thank You, Jesus. Thank You, Jesus."

The presence of the Lord permeated the room. We knew we were standing on holy ground. We came home from China with a renewed sense of awe at how God moves in people's hearts. Every day there are prayers for missing body parts at Hidden Treasures Home. It was an atmosphere filled with faith. It was an honor and a joy to be in such a place.

One of our favorite verses in the Bible is Hebrews 11:6: "And without *faith* it is impossible to *please* God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (emphasis added).

This verse doesn't say that without *success* it is impossible to please God or without *results* it is impossible to please God. We please our heavenly Father by having faith.

When sweet An Fu prayed in faith that Mark's arm would grow out, God was smiling; God was pleased. When by faith Mark let down his guard and allowed this prayer, God was smiling; God was pleased. Faith that steps out in love and takes the risk of praying for others makes God smile. How remarkable that we all carry within us the ability to please God. Scripture says: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (Heb. 11:1).

We easily believe in what we see, but faith is being confident and assured about what we do not see. We have not seen an arm grow out, but we have faith that it will. How wonderful that this faith does not make our Father shake His head in concern that we have gone off the deep end.

This faith makes Him smile because we are assured of what we do not see, as God's Word declares. "Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed'" (John 20:29).

Ephesians 5:10 instructs us to "find out what pleases the Lord." When we understand that pleasing God requires faith (Heb. 11:6), this makes it easier to recognize the exact type of faith that brings the Father such joy.

God Is Pleased When We Receive

We were excited and a little nervous. "You push the doorbell."

"No, you push the doorbell." How did we end up in northern Idaho, standing on the front porch of John Loren Sandford, a man we dearly admired but had no idea we would ever meet?

I had written John, thanking him for allowing us to reference a quote in our book and to express how he and his recently

departed wife, Paula, had inspired Mark and me to team-teach and minister together. I mentioned that it would be wonderful to meet him and that perhaps we could take a detour on our trip out West. We really had no expectation of that becoming a reality. John's quick response and invitation to stay at his home surprised us.

We added 800 miles to our road trip just to spend time with this wonderful man and brother in Christ. Our three days and nights with John were relaxing in some respects and challenging in others. Between tours of the town, home-cooked meals, Western movies and baseball games on TV, we spent hours before the Lord asking Him to show us anything we needed to know.

Early into our visit we shared with John God's promise of a creative miracle and the 20-year journey of trust. He responded, "When I first saw you two come through the door, the Lord told me He was going to do that, but I wasn't going to mention it until you said something." That was not what we expected to hear, but it was exciting.

The Lord taught us much through John. The first revelation came when Mark shared the story of when his older twin sisters first saw him and how they cried inconsolably. Mark spoke of the inner vow he made to never allow anyone to be disappointed because of him again. He also went on to assure John that he had renounced and broken that vow, and much good had resulted.

Now John spoke. He gently expressed that even though Mark had correctly perceived the lie that his spirit had taken in as an infant, Mark the adult now needed to acknowledge that his understanding of why his sisters cried was incorrect. The inner vow he made put him on constant alert to try to control other people's emotions. He didn't want anyone to ever feel pain. This prevented him from seeing what his sisters' tears really meant. John said, "Mark, your sisters didn't cry because they were disappointed. They cried because they loved

you and were sad for you.”

That thought had never occurred to Mark, and a single tear began to roll down his cheek. The idea of someone reacting with sadness out of love for him was completely new and tender territory. John explained it was time to open his heart and receive the love he didn’t take in as an infant. It was time to renounce control and to realize that people were going to feel emotions regarding his disability. It was a crippling illusion and inappropriate to think that he should try to prevent this. Mark had to allow people to feel emotions for him. He had to permit them to express sorrow for him, have joy for him, and feel *for and with* him. He had to allow people to feel the way they needed and wished to without controlling.

The next question from John pushed another button in Mark. He asked, “What if God wants to give you an arm and hand just because He loves you, just a good gift from a Father to His son? What if it is not being given to you for the sake of others? What if it is not being given so you’ll pray more effectively for others to receive their miracles?”

Mark’s response was intense and immediate, “I don’t want that; I couldn’t handle the guilt. I think the guilt would crush me.”

With John’s 50-plus years of leading people through inner healing and writing books used around the world on the topic, the word *guilt* waved a big red flag. “Why would you feel guilty, Mark?” he asked.

“Aren’t you worthy of receiving a gift from your heavenly Father?” Layer by layer the Holy Spirit uncovered other beliefs that Mark didn’t even know he held on to. These thoughts were:

- If we receive our promise, and others who see or hear us have not yet received theirs, it will trigger sorrow and grief in them, and they will feel overlooked by God. We

would be unhappy and guilt-ridden to have received such a great miracle unless others also receive theirs.

- God will not receive glory because our miracle will cause others to focus on what they do not yet have.
- After we receive our miracle, we must be used by God to pray for others, and they must receive their creative miracles. From our earliest training in praying for the sick, we were taught that God will do through us what He has done to us. When Mark first traveled with Randy Clark, he would pray for people through the night. We pictured ourselves doing the same.

We came to realize that God may be thinking differently. Receiving ministry from John left us with much to process. We decided to go out to breakfast the next morning to try to sort things through. So over warm plates of eggs, bacon and pancakes Mark and I talked and explored these new thoughts with each other and with the Lord. We thought it might help to bring up scenarios we had only allowed ourselves to discuss out loud on rare occasions.

We imagined ourselves standing on a stage with Mark's arm and hand fully formed. We could envision people being filled with joy for us over how God had moved. We then asked ourselves, What if people, rather than feeling grieved and overlooked by God because their own circumstances had not yet changed, felt a sense of awe and reverence toward God because of what He did for us? What if no one asked us to pray for them because they were overcome with joy over what had already happened?

What if it will be a moment like the one described in Psalm 126: "When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. *Then it was said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.'* The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Restore our fortunes, Lord. ... Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying

seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him" (vv. 1-6, emphasis added).

Little by little we came to realize that though we attempted to be selfless in our thinking about future ministry, we had really made this whole thing much too much about us. We had taken control away from God and decided for ourselves what life should look like after the miracle happened based on our past experiences. The Holy Spirit revealed that it was difficult for us to receive God's unconditional love from Him and others.

The condition we had placed on God's gift was that we should be able to give it away or we would crumble in guilt. With much prayer we came to the place of laying down our preconceived notions of what life should be like after the miracle. We laid it at the foot of His wonderful, freeing cross and chose to take our hands off. We did this by asking God to forgive us for taking control away from Him.

How Much Faith Do We Need?

When I was a young girl, my mom wore a necklace that intrigued me. It was a clear round capsule, and it contained a single mustard seed. The seed was extremely tiny. My mom told me that she wore the necklace to remind her of the following Bible verse: "Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matt. 17:20).

If we give our little seed of faith to the maker of heaven and earth, things change, things move, things bow down, things are created! Nothing is impossible for us because nothing is impossible for Him, and He lives in us.

So why is it that even when we apply all the faith we can muster and our faith is placed in Jesus, our mountains seem to

stay firmly planted and immovable? We believe the answer to that question is rooted in our expectation and our definition of *movement*.

Matthew 17:20 does not say the mountain will move instantly. We like “instant” answers, but God does not always work that way. We may look at other people and determine that the answers to their prayers have come instantly because we happened to be there the moment the healing took place or the moment the house sale came through. We don’t know the emotional preparation that took place before the healing or the amount of renovation that occurred before the sale.

In God’s economy, movement is a process—even movement that appears instantaneous.

Matthew 17:20 also does not say the mountain will move as one large mass. Have you ever played the game Jenga? To set up the game, you make a tower by placing rectangular blocks in a crisscross pattern. The object of the game is to remove a block without causing the tower to tumble. There is a trick to finding the block that is movable. You tap on the ends to discover which ones will slide out of the stack without disrupting the entire structure. Often one block is immovable until the blocks around it are removed.

We have seen God move mountains in a similar way, one block at a time. We speak to the mountain and tell it to move by forgiving someone. Once that block goes, we speak to the mountain and tell it to move by renouncing an ungodly inner vow. Once that block goes, we speak to the mountain again and tell it to move by asking God to heal our current broken relationships. Eventually our mountain moves from here to there, and we have not crumbled in the process.

As We Are Going

After Jesus rose from the dead and before He ascended to heaven, He gave His disciples very specific instructions. Many

in the church call this the Great Commission: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20).

The words “therefore go” are literally translated “as you are going.” In other words, as we live and go about our everyday lives we are to live out of who we are, with our destinies and promises going with us. We are not to be consumed looking for *the person(s), the place(s), the thing(s)* that fit with our promises before we serve. God fulfills our destinies and promises as we go. Each day lived in obedience to Christ is a day full of faith that pleases Him and holds the probability of our miracles being fulfilled *as we are going!*

This is the faith that makes God smile, the faith that moves mountains. It is faith that steps out in love, that releases control to God and that is lived out in daily acts of obedience to Christ.

Mark and Tammy Endres founded *Hand of Jesus Ministries Inc.*, a prayer and equipping resource to impact a hurting world. They are licensed and ordained through the Apostolic Network of Global Awakening. Their latest book, *When Heaven Seems Silent*, from which this article was adapted, released in August.

Mark and Tammy Endres talk about their incredible faith journey in writing a new book, *When Heaven Seems Silent*, at