

Matt Crouch: A Lesson From My Father on Faith

It happened over 40 years ago—May 26, 1973, to be exact—but I can remember it like it was yesterday. My parents, Paul and Jan Crouch, were racing to meet the FCC's May 28 deadline to get Trinity Broadcasting Network's first station—a tiny, non-operational UHF channel—on the air. If they didn't meet the deadline the frequency would be lost for good, and TBN's future would be in jeopardy.

There was a sense of excitement that day in our new studio at 111 Dyer Road in Santa Ana, California, as my parents and their team of volunteers worked non-stop to get ready for TBN's debut across the Los Angeles area. But that excitement soon turned to anxiety as a major obstacle presented itself.

Our studio's new microwave unit was supposed to send picture and sound to the station's transmitter atop Mount Wilson 50 miles to the north. That transmitter would in turn broadcast TBN's programming across the greater Los Angeles area. For three days TBN's engineers had worked feverishly to get the TV signal from our studio to the transmitter on Mount Wilson—all to no avail.

Something seemed to be blocking the signal from reaching Mount Wilson, and sure enough, when my father called the experts they assured him that there was no way to get the signal from where TBN's studio was located up to the transmitter on Mount Wilson because a piece of the mountain stood in the way. Their recommendation to my dad was to throw in the towel and give up. It simply couldn't be done.

I can still recall the look of discouragement that spread across my father's face as he hung up the phone. God had opened so many doors in my parents' efforts to get TBN on the

air. Now it seemed that with one word from the “experts” the door was going to close for good.

While all hope appeared to be gone to meet the FCC’s iron-clad deadline, something deep within my father’s spirit rose up and refused to take the bad news as final. As I tagged along behind him to see what he would do, my dad walked out into the Southern California evening, and climbed the ladder to the roof of the studio where TBN’s microwave dish was installed. There was only one answer to the crisis, so with faith and determination, my dad turned to God.

With tears rolling down his face my dad stretched out his hand and touched the cold, lifeless steel of the microwave dish and poured out his heart to his heavenly Father. I can’t remember his exact prayer, but it went something like: “Lord, You said that if we would have faith even the size of a grain of mustard seed, we could say to the mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and it would move.”

In that moment, etched in my mind and on my spirit, I listened as my earthly father spoke heart-to-heart to our heavenly Father, laying out the desperate need that he was facing. And as he did, a sense of God’s holy presence descended right onto the roof where we stood, and I could tell that my father knew God had heard him and would answer his prayer.

I followed my dad as he hurried back down to the studio and asked the departing, weary and doubtful engineers to give it one more try the next morning—Sunday, May 27. Though I am certain they thought it was a colossal waste of time, the engineers promised to show up.

And so at 8 o’clock sharp that Sunday morning we all gathered in TBN’s new studio control room, and waited with expectancy as the transformers warmed up and the chief engineer phoned his man stationed 50 miles away at TBN’s transmitter on Mount Wilson.

I can still remember the sound of astonishment that came from over the phone as the engineer at Mount Wilson shouted with excitement: "We've got it! We've got the picture, and it's as clear as NBC!" True to His promise, God had answered my dad's simple prayer of faith, moving a real-life dirt-and-rock mountain out of the way to enable TBN to move forward.

That weekend in 1973, without even knowing it, my dad instilled a crucial life lesson into the heart of an 11-year-old boy. That one incident was a sign post of faith in my young life—one of many I personally witnessed throughout the 40 years my dad led TBN's growth from that one small station that went on the air May 28, 1973, to a global network reaching every corner of the earth with a witness of God's love.

The lesson I learned—one I've tried to reinforce in the lives of my own two sons—is simple, but profound: God wants to move powerfully in ways both small and great in the lives of His people. All we have to do is ask.

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