

Text: 2 Kings 13:10-19

My purpose for this message: To exhort Christians to ask God for big things, not just what takes little or no faith.

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Biggie-Size Your Praying

PRAY.

When you ask God for something, which way does your praying lean: towards pint-sized requests that can be humanly explained away, or towards biggie-size requests that if *answered*—are inexplicable apart from God?

When the two men met as grad students at Stanford University, Larry Page was a computer science major pondering ways to streamline and organize the Internet. Sergey Brin was a math wizard with the ability to do something Page wanted: determine which web pages linked to which, and count and rank web links. Today, the unlikely pair—Page, the son of a college professor, and Brin, the son of Russian immigrants—employ 4000 people and their company is worth over \$100 billion. You know it as Google Inc.

No one ever accused these two 32 year-olds of thinking small. Even as students, they looked at the vast number of volumes in the Stanford library and imagined they could digitize them. In fact, last month Google began doing just that, not only with Stanford's library, but also Harvard's, Oxford's, the University of Michigan's, & NYC public.

“Think big.” It's what sales managers tell their staff; what many parents tell their children. What teachers tell their students. And what leaders tell their followers.

Let me ask you when you go to your heavenly Father, do you think big? Or are you content to pray for things that are small, and that quite honestly, you could accomplish yourself if you had to? Is what you ask God for, human-sized, or God-sized? READ 2 Kings 13:10-19.

Story:

In 813 B.C., Jehoash became the 12th king of Israel (some versions Joash, not to be confused with an earlier king in Judah by the same name). This king ruled the northern kingdom 16 years. What kind of man was he? Well, the historian Josephus wrote that he was a “good man” but God writes “he did evil in my eyes” (v.11). What evil? After the Israeli kingdom split in two, the first king of the northern kingdom King Jereboam was afraid that if his subjects made their way to Jerusalem for all the religious festivals that God required them to attend, if they went to Jerusalem for worship, for sacrificing, that he may well lose them. So he created substitute worship. He made 2 golden calves and put one on the northern tip of his kingdom, and one on the southern tip, and housed them in temples. (Not pagan gods, but the calves were meant to represent the unseen Yahweh rather than pagan gods.)

While King Jehoash disobeyed God in this matter, and was not a godly man, nevertheless several political dangers scared him into seeking the Lord.

- Military threat rising in the east: Arameans (Syria)
- Weak army: 50 cavalry, 10 chariots, 10,000 infantry
- God's prophet of the day was dying: Elisha on deathbed

Jehoash was terrified to face the Arameans without Elisha. He visited the prophet and cried out in panic, *“My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel.”* Words of surprise Elisha had said as Elijah ascended into heaven. Now words of alarm as Jehoash feared for his nation's future. “Through you, God has protected Israel time and time again. You *are* our security blanket. Now what? If you die, we will surely be

defeated by the Arameans. Our army is a joke. We have little equipment. Now what?"

Motioning toward a bow, the prophet told him to shoot out the window facing the direction of Aram. Elisha mustered his strength to help the king aim, and as the arrow flew, he explained what the symbol promised: "you will defeat the Arameans at Aphek." Good news for certain.

But there was more. Elisha said, "Strike the ground with the arrows;" he may well have been instructed to him to *shoot* them into the ground. Apparently there were 5-6 arrows, and Elisha wanted him to shoot them all. Details are missing but based on Elisha's anger, we can assume that he told the king to do something that demonstrated faith, and the king didn't.

The man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times. (19) YOU DIDN'T ASK FOR ENOUGH!

And the dying prophet wasn't smiling when he said it. He was angry at the king because this was not simply an oversight, a mistake, but proof of little faith; the king didn't expect much. Do you?

Some of you young men and women want to be married but maybe the older you get without a prospect in sight, the less you're asking God for. You started out wanting godly, tall, dark and handsome, but *now* you pray, "Dear God, I'll take a man that's breathing."

Maybe you have a son who's lost, and a drunk. Do you ask God to save him too, or have you decided that if God sobers him up, that will be enough? Maybe you've been praying for a job and you're willing to go anywhere. That's a good thing and at the end of the day, you *may* need to be flexible enough to move to Indiana. On the other hand, wouldn't it be better if your children didn't get uprooted? If so, *ask* for that.

Biggie-sized praying; bold praying. By this I don't mean that we are demanding of God. He runs the universe, not a catering service and it's humility alone that's the proper attitude. But there's a difference between being bold in our praying and being demanding.

Why is it true—and it is—that in general, Christians tend to downsize their prayers rather than upsize? I think it was what Philip Yancey put on one of his book's as a title a number of years ago: *Disappointment with God*. If you've never been disappointed with God, I don't believe you!

"God disappointed me because when I asked for *this*; didn't get it. I asked for *that*, didn't get it." And, is it possible that due to a history of some unanswered prayers, we've tamed our praying? Not asking for much keeps us from being disappointed. Instead of going for the gold, we go for the bronze..., or zirconium. I expect little from my God; no wonder I get it. Oh well, at least I'm never disappointed.

READ Mark 10:46-52. "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me." When Jesus asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" it could have been a time to be timid, or *vague*: "Uh, bless me Lord," or "Well, help me to get enough money begging today, so that I can eat tomorrow."

Instead he was very specific, and very bold: "Lord, I want to see." I want to see. "More than anything else—I want to see." Bold. Not demanding: "If you heal me I'll follow you anywhere; if you don't, I won't." Just bold.

Everything is possible for him who believes. (Jesus in Mark 9:23)

What is impossible with men is possible with God. (Jesus in Luke 18:27)

Nothing is impossible with God. (Gabriel in Luke 1:37)

You do not have because you do not ask God. (Apostle James in James 4:2)

Concl:

You pull up to the Wendy's drive-in and give your order. A disembodied voice asks, "You want to biggie-size that?" You say, "Yes" and pull up to the window. You pay your bill and the clerk gives you your bag of food. Inside is your sandwich..., and a *small* fries, and *small* Coke. If that happened week after week, at 10 weeks it would be understandable if you no longer had confidence that you were going to get what you ordered.

But listen to Bruce Wilkinson in *The Prayer of Jabez*:

When was the last time God worked through you in such a way that you knew beyond doubt that God had done it? In fact, when was the last time you saw miracles happen on a regular basis in your life? If you're like most believers I've met, you wouldn't know how to ask for that kind of experience, or even if you should.

I know it's easy to lose heart when doesn't give us what we ask for; so we lower and lower and lower expectations. But God is in the business of building our *faith*. And as he taught the disciples through a parable in Lk.18, he taught them so that "they might always pray and never give up." Do not lose heart; pray big. And let God build your faith.