

Renewal Ministries of Colorado Springs

The 45 Day Prayer Challenge

December 5, 1994, was a significant day in my life. Not because I had to drive back late that night from Gig Harbor to Seattle in snow and ice. But because of a story I heard from Doug Coe that has given me a completely new understanding of what it means to pray.

That night Doug Coe, who is a remarkable man of faith, told this story about his friend Bob Hunter. Bob was a new Christian, searching about to understand what it all meant. One day he asked Doug, his good friend: "Doug, do you really believe what the Bible says about moving mountains when we pray?" Doug thought about it and answered, "Sure." Bob was rather incredulous and asked him, "Do you mean to say that you believe that if I prayed for a mountain to move, that it would move?" Doug thought for a while and the conversation went something like this:

"Let me put it this way. I not only believe it, but I'll make you a bet. A \$500 bet. Bob, what do you know about Africa?"

"Nothing."

"What do you think about when you think of Africa?"

"I think about monkeys swinging from trees."

"Then here's the bet. I want you to pray for 45 days, 'God help Africa.' You can't miss a single day. And that's all you have to pray, 'God help Africa.' At the end of 45 days, you be the judge on whether any mountains have moved. If you think a mountain has moved, you pay me \$500. If you don't think a mountain has moved, you just tell me, and I'll pay you **\$500**, no questions asked."

Bob, being an astute businessman, rather liked the odds. He accepted the bet. And he began to pray daily, "God help Africa."

Just a few days later, he was at a dinner and sat next to an elderly lady. In the course of the conversation, he found out she lived in Uganda, and ran an orphanage there. He began asking her a number of questions about Uganda and Africa. After a while, she finally asked him why he was so interested in Africa. To which he responded, with some embarrassment, "You'll never believe this, but I made a bet with a good friend," and proceeded to tell her about his bet with Doug Coe. By the end of the evening, she invited him to return to Uganda with her in a few days to visit the orphanage. He accepted the invitation.

You can guess that when he visited the orphanage in Uganda, his heart was touched by the orphans. After coming back to the U.S. he got a few friends together and bought a load of toys and clothes, and sent them to Uganda. The following week, he got a phone call from the woman at the orphanage: "Mr. Hunter, the children are so grateful for what you did, they would love it if you could come again so they can make a special presentation to you to show you their appreciation. Can you come?" He accepted the invitation, and was off to Uganda again.

After a very heartwarming ceremony at the orphanage, there was a phone call for Bob, from the President of Uganda. He had heard about the gifts, and called to thank him personally and on behalf of his country, for what Bob had done for the orphans. He also invited Bob to visit him that afternoon.

When Bob arrived that afternoon for his appointment, the President was just in the middle of rushing out of his office. He apologized that he had to go off to some appointments, but invited Bob to come along, so they could get acquainted in the car. Bob accepted. Along the way, at one of the stops, Bob looked out the window to see what appeared to be a stockyard; only this was a stockyard not filled with cattle, but with men. Bob asked the President what he was seeing. The President responded that it was a political prison, and those men were his political enemies. The conversation went something like this:

"But Mr. President, that's not right to have men living in such horrible conditions. You must let them go."

"But those are my political enemies; men who have tried to subvert my authority. I cannot let them go. That would be foolish."

"You have to let them go; it's just not right that human beings would have to live in those conditions."

The conversation did not last long, and shortly thereafter Bob was back home in the U.S. About a week after getting back, he received a phone call. This time it was the State Department, asking him to come to a meeting with the Undersecretary for African Affairs.

Rather puzzled over the purpose of such a meeting, he nevertheless went to the appointment. At the meeting, the Undersecretary of State for African Affairs and Bob had a conversation along these lines:

"Mr. Hunter, on behalf of the Government of the United States, I want to thank you for what you have done in Uganda."

"What? The U.S. Government is thanking me for sending some toys to some orphans in Uganda?"

"No, Mr. Hunter. It is about the political prisoners."

"What about the political prisoners?"

"The President of Uganda recently released the political prisoners, which is something our government has been trying to get him to do for years, without success. He told us after taking this action that he was doing it because of what you said to him."

"What I said to him?"

"Yes. What exactly did you say to him?"

Needless to say, Bob Hunter was flabbergasted. But the story doesn't end there. After the State Department meeting, the President of Uganda called Bob over the phone, and asked him to return to Uganda to help him form a new Cabinet for his country.

"But Mr. President, I don't know anything about your country or the people who would best serve in your government. I'm just an American businessman. How can I possibly help you choose a cabinet?"

Bob went and did what he could to help the President select his new ministers. And since that time, a close friendship has developed between Bob Hunter, American businessman and the President of Uganda. The President even stays in Bob's home in the D.C. area when he visits the U.S.

And you can guess, after those 45 days of praying, "God help Africa," Bob Hunter sent Doug Coe a check for \$500.

That night in Gig Harbor, Doug Coe proceeded to tell us that he told his story later to a group of around twenty very successful business executives, all members of the Young President Organization, an international association of business people who have become the chief executives or owners of companies above a certain size by age 40.

After he told the story at this YPO lunch, 13 of them came up to him and asked him if he would take on the bet with them. Swallowing hard, after doing some quick math, he nevertheless accepted the bet. He laid out the ground rules for them that they had to pray every day for 45 days. They did not have to tell him what they were praying for, and at the end of the 45 days, it would be entirely up to them to decide whether a mountain had moved as a result of their prayers.

After those 45 days, Doug received 12 checks for \$500 each. A while later, he received the 13th check, accompanied by a letter that said something like this:

"Doug, my mountain did not move. But the discipline of praying every day for 45 days has changed my life, and so I feel I owe you this \$500."

I was moved by that story. I began praying that night. Toward the end of the 45 days, I eagerly watched to see if the mountain was moving. It did not. But I heard some deep rumblings, turned around, and saw that a different mountain had moved from the one I had prayed for, but a mountain nevertheless. And the discipline of praying every day in that way changed me too. I woke up, and still wake up, every morning, and the first thing on my mind is the prayer.

What are the mountains of your life? What are those unmovable things in your life that you would never believe could change? What is there around you in your world that desperately needs the movement of mountains to change? Is your heart broken by something you see that desperately needs God to intervene in mountain-moving fashion?

Praying for 45 days is not a formula it is the beginning of a discipline, and an exercise in faith, that can change our lives. There is no bargaining with God involved here; there is no "deal" whereby if we pray for 45 days for whatever we want, He will give it to us. But if you think you want to embark on this faith journey, let me offer you some suggestions:

- ✓ Pray to move a mountain God would be pleased to move for you, because it is on His heart as well.
- ✓ Pray that the mountain move; don't tell God how to move the mountain.
- ✓ Make sure it is a mountain you pray to move, not a molehill.
- ✓ When you pray for a mountain to move, don't be surprised that the mountain that actually moves turns out to be a different one.
- ✓ And remember the line from the C.S. Lewis character in the stage play and movie Shadowlands:

"Prayer doesn't change God. It changes me."