

Just Do It, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 18041003

2 Timothy 1:1-14 and Luke 17:5-10

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I love the disciples' request of Jesus: "Increase our faith!" There are other examples of the disciples virtually ordering Jesus to do various things. Mark recalled that right after Jesus told the disciples what was going to happen to him, that he would be crucified, James and John the sons of Zebedee asked him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."¹ Luke recalled that after Jesus finished praying in a certain place, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."² Martha, distracted by her many tasks, came to him and asked, "Lord, tell my sister to help me."³

Jesus could do so many things, so it was only natural, I suppose, that the disciples would expect him to be able to increase their faith. Jesus could work miracles like healing blind people, turning water into wine, and walking on water, but he could not increase his disciples' faith. What does this mean? Jesus could work miracles, but when he healed someone he said, "*Your faith* has made you whole." He said it to the woman suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years,⁴ to Bartimaeus the blind beggar in Jericho,⁵ and to one of the ten lepers healed in Luke 8.

A church member might ask the minister, "Increase my faith!" However, a minister has no more power than Jesus and cannot increase a person's faith. We can not expect someone else to increase our faith. We do it by ourselves.

Jesus said, all you need is the tiniest bit of faith, faith the size of a mustard seed, and that is tiny. Jesus was joking here on both ends. A mustard seed, on one end, is ridiculously small. It gives the ability, on other end, to move a tree. A mulberry tree would be uprooted and moved to the sea with faith the size of a grain of mustard! It is a hyperbole, but it makes its point. A tiny bit of faith makes great difference.

When you have tiny bit of faith, you can say to mulberry tree, "be uprooted and be planted in the sea." Some have experienced uprooting: a faith turned over, ripped from the ground, and taken away from its nourishment. It may have happened through the death of a loved one or the loss of a job. We may feel as though we have lost our grounding.. Our roots have been ripped out of the earth.. But in that uprooting, we can also be planted by the sea: near refreshing water and the life-giving love of Christ. Being uprooted is not necessarily the end. "Bloom where you're planted" is descriptive. Such uprootings can increase faith.

¹Mark 10:35-37

²Luke 11:1

³Luke 10:40

⁴Matthew 9:20

⁵Mark 10:46

How do we come by our faith? Look at Timothy, as an example. Who was he? Paul found him in Lystra, which is in Cilicia of Anatolia in modern Turkey.⁶ Timothy was already a disciple. He was the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer and of a Greek father. He was well spoken of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium.⁷ Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him on one of his missionary journeys.⁸ Paul called Timothy, "my co-worker"⁹

How did Timothy come by his faith? He saw the Christian faith in his grandmother Lois and in his mother Eunice. The effect of family is important. Children see the faith of their parents and learn from them. If parents let their children know that church is important enough to sacrifice other activities in order to attend worship and youth groups, their children will learn. If parents do volunteer work, their children will learn. If parents lead devotions around the dinner table, their children will learn faith.

Timothy learned faith from his family. Then, he claimed it for his own. You inherit your faith from your family and learn it from teachers, but don't let that remain as your faith. Make it your own by questioning, talking, and coming up with your own answers that make sense to you.

Then, how does faith increase? By practice, prayer and prizing.

By *practice*, I mean, just do it! Do your faith. Performance makes faith happen. Without complaining, do what Jesus asks, slavishly. *Love* others: love your neighbors and love your enemies. If you don't love them, act as though you do! The love will follow.

Believe in the love God has for you. *Serve* others: feed the hungry, clothe naked, listen to the needs of others, and offer the cup of cold water.

Forgive others the way you want God to forgive you. This practicing of faith makes it grow.

By *prayer*, I mean prayer of others for you, and your prayers for your own faith. Ask for and count on the prayers of other members of the community of faith. Spend time each day in private devotion and the reading of scriptures. There are many devotional guides that are available for your use in private prayer. *Practice* praying! Pray by concentrating on the love God has for you. If you've forgotten how much God loves you, remember that God loved the world so much, God gave God's beloved son, Jesus Christ.

By *prizing*, I mean treasuring your faith. We are given something important. It must be regarded highly. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you. As you share it, it will grow.

Prizing includes the concept of stewardship. How well do you take care of that which is entrusted to you by God? Support your faith and the fellowship of faith with your time, talents, and treasure. Unfortunately, some people give as though their faith were worth a mustard seed! You can purchase a whole bottle of mustard seeds for a few dollars! That is not saying much about value of one's faith!

I am not implying that we can increase our faith by buying more, but faith does

⁶Acts 16:1

⁷Acts 16:2

⁸Acts 16

⁹Romans 16:21

increase as we give of ourselves. The more we put into our faith, the more it increases. That is what Jesus meant with his mustard seed image. He could not give or increase the disciples' faith. But their little faith, if practiced, prayed, and prized, could grow into a flourishing tree.