

# Prayers God Always Answers— Prayers for Specific, Conspicuous Results



## MARK 11:20–24

<sup>20</sup> As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. <sup>21</sup> And Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.” <sup>22</sup> And Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God. <sup>23</sup> Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. <sup>24</sup> Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

# *When you pray . . . .*

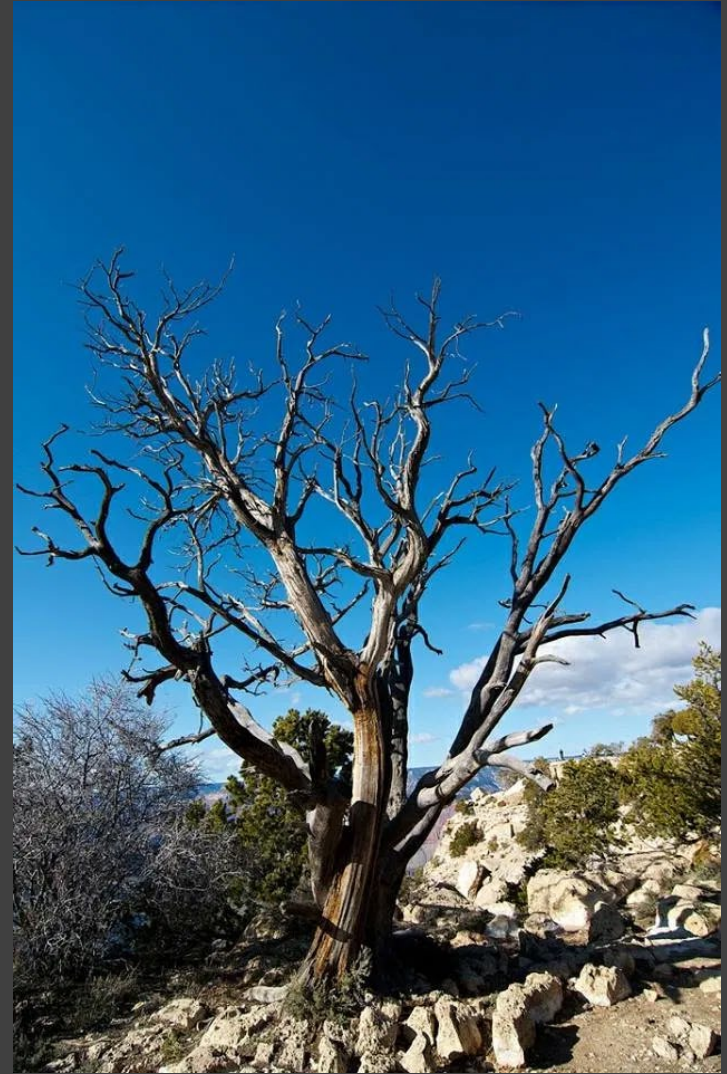
1. Trust God.
2. Be specific.
3. Don't be afraid to pray for God-sized answers.

# 1. Trust God.

And Jesus  
answered  
them,  
Have  
faith  
in God.

Mark 11:22 ESV

- The disciples were amazed that Jesus had **spoken** to a fruitless fig tree and made it **wither**.
- His **word** had that kind of power.
- The Lord's point to his disciples is that **their words, too, had power**.
- That when they spoke to God in prayer, **stuff happens!**





He prefaces his instructions about believing prayer with: “**Have faith in God.**”

These verses  
are **not**  
grounds for the  
“*name it and  
claim it*” view  
of prayer.



- The Lord's promise is *not* about *arbitrarily getting anything you want apart from God's will, but about trusting God.*



- It's about *trusting* in *God's power* to respond to our needs and God's *wisdom* in knowing the best way to answer our requests.



The *stronger*  
*your faith*, the  
more you will *abide*  
*in Christ* and the  
more your prayers  
will be *in line with*  
*God's will*, in which  
case,  
God is delighted to  
answer your  
prayers.



John 15:7

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

- Jesus' words here in Mark 11 are emphatic.
- When he says, "*Truly* I say to you . . ." he uses the New Testament word *amen*.
- It's the same word used at the end of prayers to express *agreement* or "*so be it.*"
- It is sometimes used on the front of a sentence to introduce an infallible truth: "*truly*" or "*verily.*"
- The famous KJV "*verily, verily* I say unto you" is, in Greek "*amen, amen.*"

## Mark 11:23

*Truly*, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.

*ἀμὴν* λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ὃς ἂν εἴπῃ τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ· Ἄρθητι καὶ βλήθητι εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, καὶ μὴ διακριθῆ ἔν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἀλλὰ πιστεύῃ ὅτι ὃ λαλεῖ γίνεται, ἔσται αὐτῷ.

What Amen means:

“Mark this, that you must always speak the **Amen** firmly. Never doubt that God in his mercy will surely hear you and say ‘**yes**’ to your prayers. . . . Do not leave your prayer without having said or thought, “Very well, God has heard my prayer; this I know as a certainty and a truth.”

—Martin Luther



- Having **faith** in God when we pray is in contrast to **doubt**.
- The word “**doubt**” (*diakrinō*) means “**to judge between two.**”
- It describes a *divided judgment*, to be *of two minds*.

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- The point of the passage is to make sure our prayers do not go unanswered because we *never asked*, or we *asked with doubting hearts*.

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Fred Penny's **unasked request** for \$50 for his 7<sup>th</sup> grade French class's weekend trip to the French Islands just off the southern coast of Newfoundland



Vs.

his sister's **request** for \$1,000 for her class's 14-day Mediterranean cruise.

**She asked; he was afraid to!**



Fred wrote:

“This has taught me something about prayer. Do I sometimes fail to ask God for what is on my heart? Do I think his resources are scarce? Does my failure to ask indicate that my faith is small or that I assume God is unwilling to give what is good? My sister and my parents taught me more about prayer that day than they will ever know.”



## 2. Be specific.

Mark 11:23

<sup>23</sup> Truly, I say to you, whoever says to *this* mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.



- When Jesus says “*this* mountain” he uses the *demonstrative pronoun* that focuses on a specific mountain.
- *This* mountain, not that one, and not mountains in general.
- *This* one!

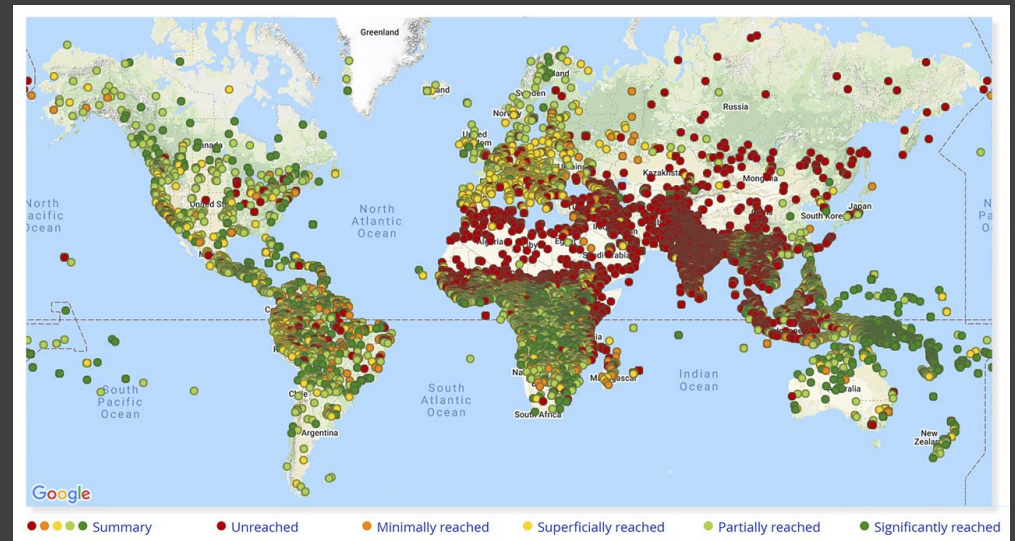
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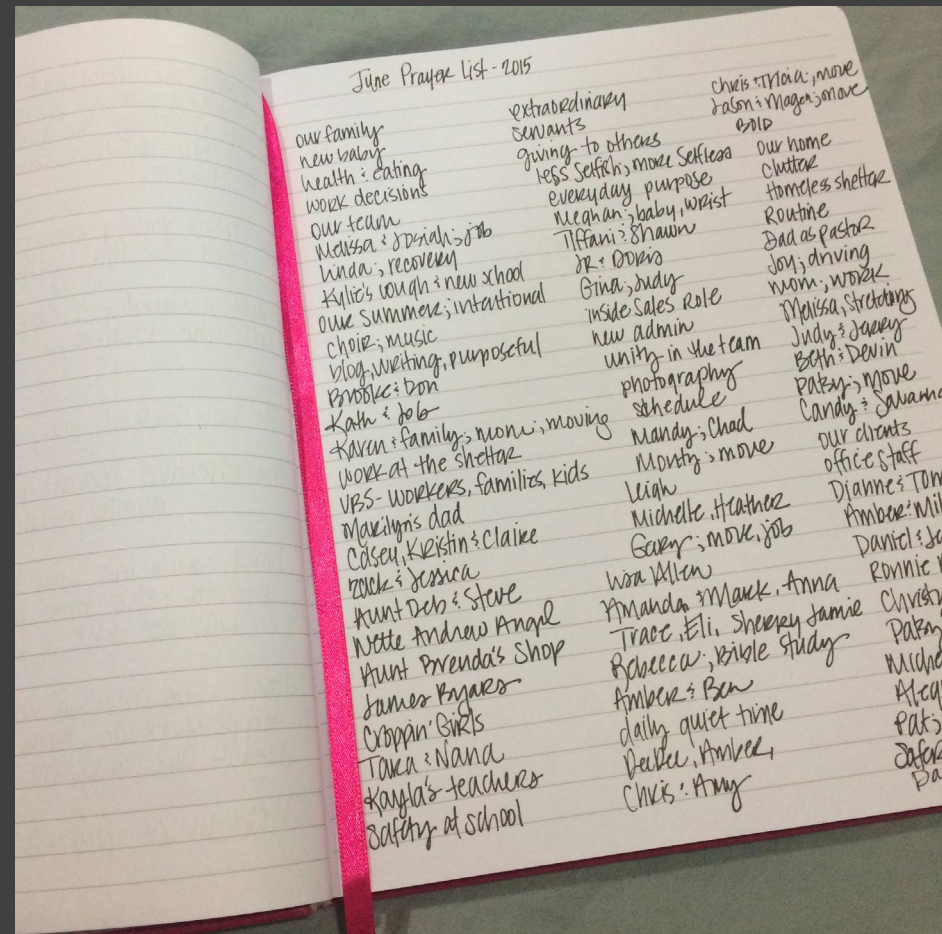
- In any relationship a lack of specific communication can be a problem.
- Try talking only in generalities with your spouse and see how well *that* develops your relationship.
- *What would you like for your birthday?* “O, just get me something that will *bless me*, dear.”
- *What would you like for lunch?* “I think I could really go for a blessing.”
- Requests like that would simply confuse and frustrate your spouse.
- Likewise, God longs to genuinely relate to you on a specific level. That’s why Jesus commanded us to pray and showed us how to pray specific things.

- General prayers lack the power of **specific, conspicuous requests**.
- If you prayed, “*God bless our missionaries*” or “*save the unreached peoples of the earth,*” God could answer that prayer a thousand times, and we might never know it.
- It’s not precise enough.



- Praying general prayers *feels safe* because no one can prove that the prayer was not answered, but it *doesn't do much to develop our faith* or to *achieve God-sized results*.

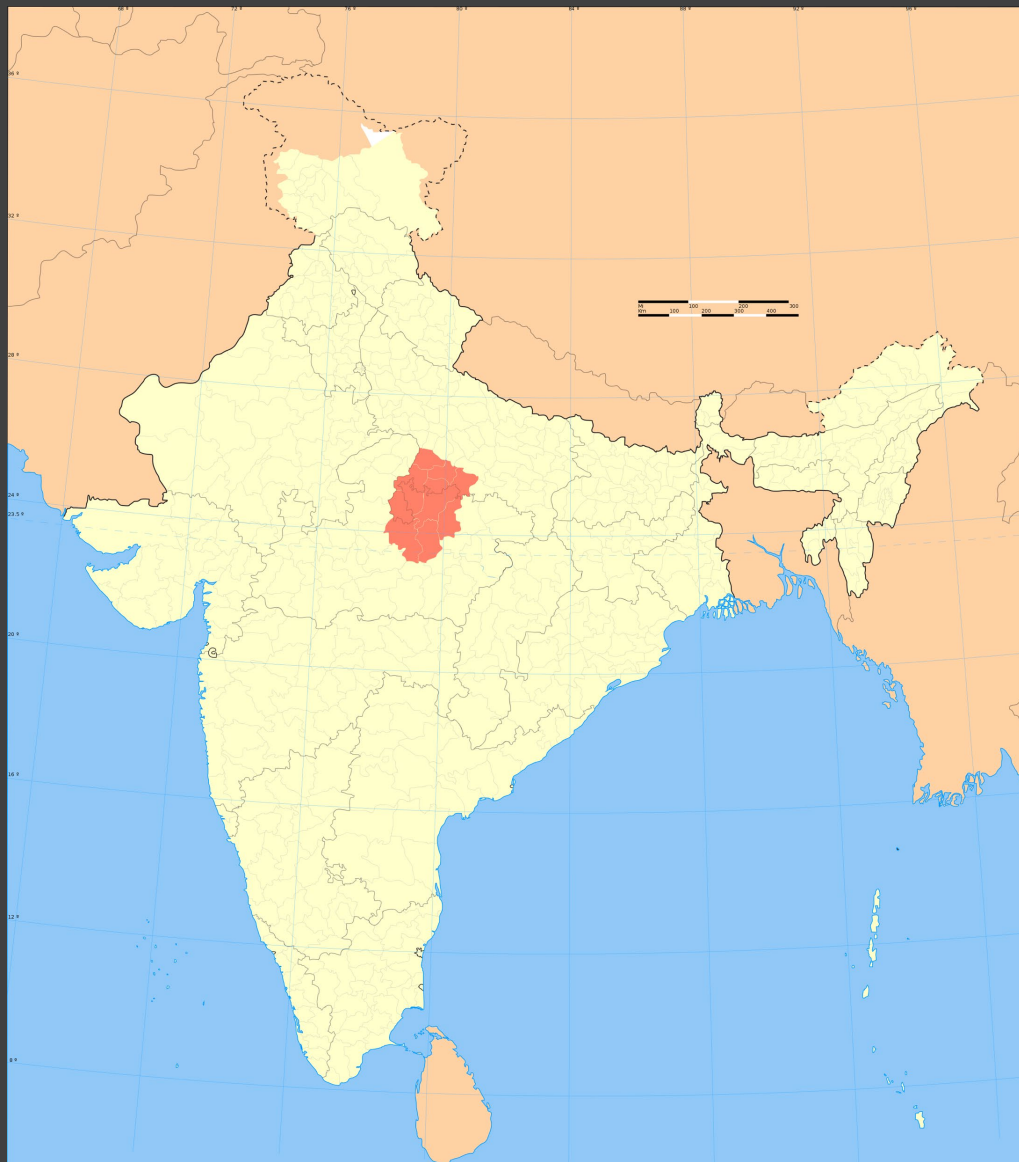
- A *prayer journal* is a great way to practice the discipline of praying specific prayers and also of keeping a record of God's answers to them.
- One of my quarterly prayer journals had **192 specific requests**. By the end of that quarter, God had already answered **146** of them!
- God has answered so many of my prayers beyond my wildest imagination that my prayer journals *read like they were written in reverse*.
- I have a confirmed faith in God because I have seen him work.



### 3. Don't be afraid to pray for God-sized answers.

- Moving mountains may be a *hyperbole*, but it's still meant to teach us that *believing prayer can level mountains*.
- When a mountain hops up and jumps into the sea, it's *something people would notice*.
- It is a *visible, measurable result*.
- *Jesus invites us to pray for specific, conspicuous results.*
- *Be bold!*

# Praying for a Bible for the Bundeli people



- It started as a prayer request from my friend Ajai Lall around 2004.
- As we continued to pray for the Bundli people and specifically for a **Bundeli Bible**, God began to work.
- The following **Christmas** there was a great **evangelistic breakthrough** in the Bundeli-speaking region of India—along with great persecution.



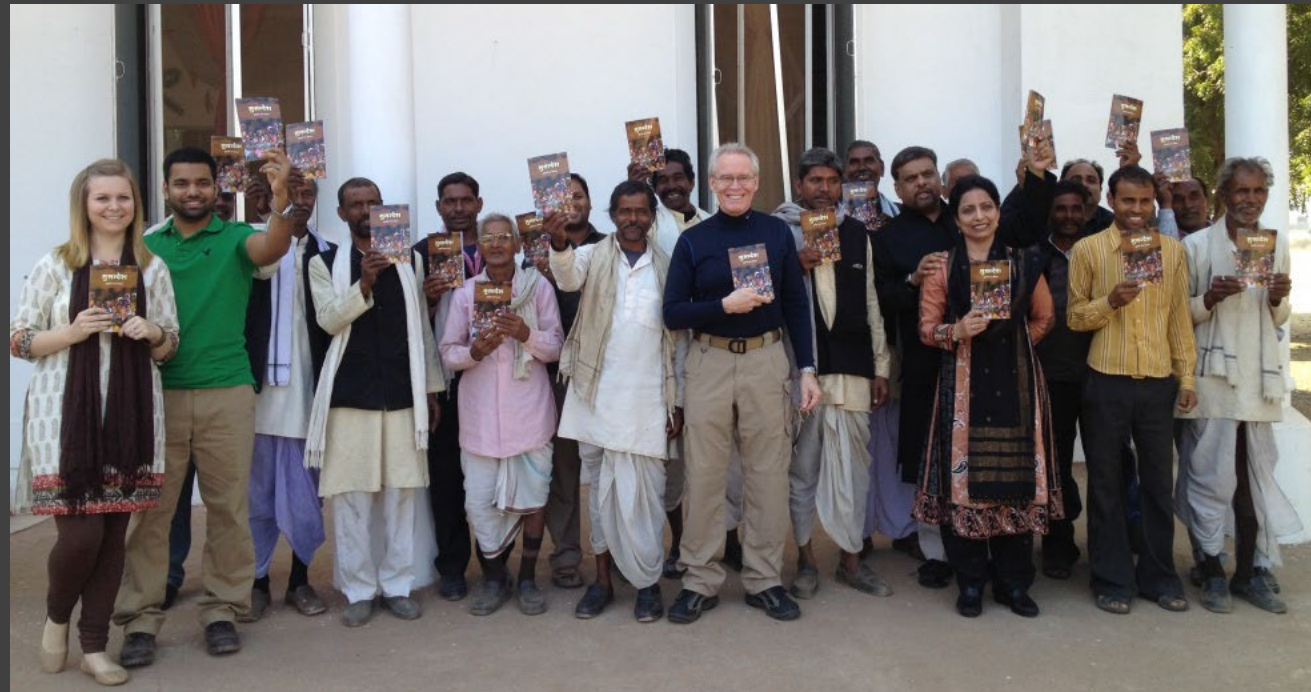
- Ajai discovered a small group of Indian professor from the that region who has started a translation of the NT, but only had an imperfect, unpublished translation of Matthew.
- In 2006 I went to India with a team from **Pioneer Bible Translators** to met with the Bundeli translators.







In 2012 we celebrated the publication of the Bundeli New Testament in Damoh, India.



# Conclusion

- What mountain stands in your way?
- What peak needs to be leveled for you to live more fully for God?
- Don't just murmur generalities!
- Get down on your knees and **pray a conspicuous, God-sized request**, because God answers those kind of prayers.