

Discussion Questions

I Told the Mountain to Move

Dear Reader,

We hope you were moved by this compelling prayer journey by author Patricia Raybon. In sharing her struggle to learn to pray, Patricia's hope was that her story would inspire others in the body of Christ to prioritize their own prayer lives—indeed, that a fresh army of prayer warriors would rise up to move the mountains blocking their paths by recommitting to pray in ways that glorify God, reap rich blessings, and build God's Kingdom on earth.

Yes, Patricia wants to inspire others to pray boldly for Christ!

As a truth teller, however, she knows that prayer work also involves deep personal reflection. With that in mind, we have prepared the following questions to stimulate such deliberation, both about *I Told the Mountain to Move* and about prayer in general.

Some suggestions for readers: Don't rush through this list. As in prayer, take time to explore these questions. Invite others to join you in rereading the book and in examining the issues it raises about prayer. Perhaps your Sunday school class, your book club, or a group of coworkers would enjoy spending time together discussing this book on prayer.

As you read together, seek the Lord's leading as you study, allowing him to enrich the experience of discussing fresh truths with others. Above all, allow your discussion and reflection to ignite your belief in God's ability to *move you* to move mountains for him!

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1. For starters, what is prayer? Patricia offers several definitions of prayer in *I Told the Mountain to Move*. Which definition is correct? Is prayer enjoying God's presence? Or listening to God's voice? Or seeking God's thoughts? Or relying on the Holy Spirit? Or asking God's favor, or even knowing God's thoughts? Which definition of prayer feels right to you? Is your own definition of prayer altogether different?
2. Patricia sought to learn about prayer during a period of personal stress and crisis. What do you think was wrong with her praying before this time? What impact has prayer had on you during periods of personal struggle or crisis?
3. What about your praying? What in your prayer life, if anything, do you think needs to change?
4. When mountains rise up, why does God want us to pray to move them?

5. If God knows everything already, why does he ask us to bring our burdens to him in prayer? What did Patricia learn about God during the course of her prayer journey?
6. Patricia's human relationships—with her husband, her mother, and her daughters—were sometimes strained. How do relationship problems affect your prayer life?
Conversely, how does your prayer life impact your relationships?
7. Patricia usually prays at her desk and at her bedside by writing out her prayers in a journal. How do you feel about writing prayers? What are the benefits? Are there drawbacks? How does this practice differ from your prayer style?
8. As Patricia's prayer journey began, she was surprised to realize that prayer, in some ways, is actually easy. What about prayer is easy? At any time, has prayer felt easy to you? If it sometimes feels hard, as it did later to Patricia, what makes praying feel hard?
9. Prayer scholars often emphasize the idea of making precise requests during prayer. Why do you think precision in prayer is so important? If it's important to be precise, what role does faith have in praying?
10. A nurse in the hospital prayed for Patricia's husband. Can you think of a time when God wanted you to pray for another person? How did you know you were being asked to pray? How did you respond?
11. What about collective prayer, or praying with others? Patricia was led to reach out by e-mail to a community of prayers on the Internet. How do you feel about "online" community prayers?
12. Along her journey, Patricia discovered an interesting truth—that learning to pray is about learning to love. What does this mean exactly? In what ways is learning to love interconnected with learning to pray?
13. Moving mountains always means moving ourselves in some way. What mountain in your life would move if you made a move first in a higher, fresher, fearless direction? Explain.
14. If Patricia is right, that "telling the hard truth" is one requirement for effective prayer, what truth do you need to address in your own life? Why is telling the hard truth so difficult?
15. What role does gratitude have in prayer? For example, when Patricia thanked God for her husband's successful surgery, she suddenly began to remember the plight of poor and sick children in Africa. How did this train of thought affect you as you were reading this story?
16. Patricia struggled with the fact that her mother wasn't perfect—but who is? What relationship challenges are you facing in your own life?

17. Patricia's shocking confession is a major turning point in her story. Were you surprised by it? How did it affect you? Now read James 5:16. Do you think James meant that public confession is required of all believers?

18. When she fasted, Patricia was confronted with a judgmental streak in her personality. Have you ever fasted? What have you learned during the course of the fast? If you haven't tried a fast as part of your spiritual growth, why haven't you? Do you think fasting is expected of believers? If so, why?

19. One of Patricia's biggest challenges was her younger daughter's turn from the Christian church to Islam. What do you think of the way Patricia handled this challenge? What would you have done differently?

20. What inspired Patricia's letter to her mother? Do you think the letter, arriving so late in her mother's life, said enough? Do you need to write a letter to someone in your life? What is stopping you from writing it?

What are other ways you would choose to reach out to a loved one to say "I love you" and why?

21. If you pray in Jesus' name, what does this mean to you? Has your understanding about "praying in Jesus' name" changed since reading Patricia's book? If so, in what ways?

22. Patricia's prayers didn't move every mountain in her life—at least not in ways she had expected. Does that mean she prayed wrong? When our mountains don't move as we would like, how can prayer still make a difference?

23. Patricia cites twenty-four Prayer Lessons in this book. Do you agree that prayer has such rules? Are there others she might have included? Does she include any that you wouldn't follow? Of the twenty-four prayer lessons in *I Told the Mountain to Move*, which lesson had the biggest impact on you, and why? Which were new to you? Which are you applying now in your prayer life?

24. At the end of *I Told the Mountain to Move*, Patricia takes her mother to a baseball game. While the trophy is being awarded, Patricia reveals one final surprise in this story. What did the ending suggest is the outcome of a life of prayer? Did the ending, and this book, make you want to pray more?

List here, in precise fashion, the most important petitions on your prayer list:

Thank you for participating in this discussion, and for sharing these questions with others. God bless you and your loved ones as you continue to seek the Lord—and seek to glorify him—by moving your mountains in prayer!