

"Expect Great Things; Attempt Great Things"

--William Carey, 1792

"Expect great things; attempt great things," the quotation attributed to William Carey, has a mixed literary history. Originally spoken in his sermon to the [Baptist Association meeting in Northampton](#), England, May 30, 1792, Carey used the citation to urge his Baptist colleagues to enter the missionary enterprise. William Finnemore (*The Story of a Hundred Years: 1823-1923*, Oxford: At the University Press, 1923, p. 14), suggested that the saying formed the twofold division of Carey's sermon.

The significance and contemporary use of Carey's proverbial saying continues. For example, on February 20, 2001, [The Rev. Dr. George L. Carey](#) (no relation to William Carey), former [Archbishop Canterbury, Church of England](#), urged Nigerian Anglicans to trust in God and [to expect great things from God](#). In addition, numerous [educational institutions](#) and [churches](#) use Carey's saying as a motto.

Various forms of the saying appear in the sources, but the most probable form was *"Expect great things; attempt great things."* Among others, [William Staughton](#), one of the founding members of the [Baptist Missionary Society](#) in 1792, cites Carey's saying in the short form.

Below are listed the various forms of the saying and the sources:

Expect great things--attempt great things.

- William Staughton, [*The Baptist Mission in India: Containing a Narrative of Its Rise, Progress, and Present Condition, A Statement of the Physical and Moral Character of the Hindoos, Their Cruelties, Tortures and Burnings, With a Very Interesting Description of Bengal*](#), (Philadelphia: Hellings and Aitken, 1811), [title page 1](#).
- Miron Winslow, [*A Sketch of Missions; or History of the Principal Attempts*](#)

to Propagate Christianity among the Heathen, (Andover, Massachusetts: Flag and Gould, 1819), pp. 250-251.

- John Scott, *The Life of the Rev. Thomas Scott, D.D., Rector of Aston Sandford, Bucks; Including a Narrative Drawn Up By Himself, and Copious Extracts of His Letters*. Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong and Crocker & Brewster; New York: John P. Haven, 1822, p. 125 [this account states that Andrew Fuller reported this form of the saying to Rev. Thomas Scott].
- Eustace Carey and William Yates. *Vindication of the Calcutta Baptist Missionaries: In Answer to "A Statement relative to Serampore, by J. Marshman, D.D. with Introductory Observations by John Foster."* London: Wightman & Co. and Parbury, 1828. [Title Page](#) [34](#) [35](#)
- John Dyer. "The Rev. Doctor Carey, Professor of Oriental Languages in the College of Fort William, Calcutta, &c, &c." In *The Christian Keepsake, and Missionary Annual*. Edited by William Ellis. London, Paris, and America: Fisher, Son, & Co., 1837. [Title Page](#) [Page 11](#)
- "Dr. Marshman" [Obituary]. *The Museum of Foreign Literature, Science and Art*. Vol. V, New Series. Vol. XXXIII. Edited by Robert Walsh, Eliakim Littell, and John Jay Smith. Philadelphia: E. Littell, & Co., 1838, p. 419; reprint, *The Friend of India*, December, 1837.
- Holmes and Co., *The Bengal Obituary, or a Record to Perpetuate the Memory of Departed Worth, Being a Compilation of Tablets and Monumental Inscriptions from Various parts of the Bengal and Agra Presidencies. To which is Added Biographical Sketches and Memoirs of Such as Have Pre-Eminently Distinguished Themselves in the History of British India, since the Formation of the European Settlement to the Present Time* (Calcutta: J. Thomas, Baptist Mission Press, 1848), p. 335 and p. 341.
- M. J. Knowlton, "The Ningpo Mission and Our Duty." *The Missionary Magazine*. XVIII/9 (September 1863):336.

Attempt great things; expect great things.

- *The Latter Day Luminary, by a Committee of the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions*, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Anderson and Meehan, 1818), [title page 1](#).

- [Francis Wayland \(Introductory Essay\) in Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey, D.D.: Late Missionary to Bengal; Professor of Oriental Languages in the College of Fort William, Calcutta*, \(Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1836\), p. xvii.](#)
- [Memorial Tablet to Carey from Harvey Lane Baptist Church, Leicester, England, Located in the William Carey Museum, Central Baptist Church, Leicester, England, UNITED KINGDOM](#)

Expect great things from God;[,] attempt great things for God.

- [Brief Narrative of the Baptist Mission in India: Including an Account of Translations of the Sacred Scriptures into the Various Languages of the East. Fifth edition. London: Sold by Button & Son, 1819, p. 3.](#)
- [Rev. Thomas Smith. *The History and Origin of the Missionary Societies*. Vol. I. \(London: Thos. Kelly and Richd. Evans, 1824\), p. 317.](#)
- [Anderson, Christopher. *A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. William Carey, D.D. of Serampore, Bengal, Delivered in Charlotte Chapel, on the Evening of 30th November 1834*. 2nd ed. London: Parbury, Allen and Co., J. Nisbet, 1835.](#)
- [Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey, D.D.: Late Missionary to Bengal; Professor of Oriental Languages in the College of Fort William, Calcutta. With an Introductory Essay by Francis Wayland, D.D., President of Brown University*, \(Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1836\), p. 50.](#)
- [Baptist Missionary Society, William Carey Jubilee Medal. 1841. Obverse Reverse](#)
- [Baptist Missionary Society, Jubilee, Anti-Slavery Medal. 1842.](#)
- [William Cathcart, ed., *The Baptist Encyclopedia*, 2 Vols., Rev. ed., \(Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1883\), Vol. I, p. 182.](#)
- [Arthur C. Chute, *William Carey, A Sketch of Beginnings in Modern Missions*, Prefatory Note by Rev. E. B. Hulbert, D.D. \(Chicago: Goodman & Dickerson, 1891\), pp. 24-25.](#)
- [Plaque Commemorating William Carey, Lower Circular Road Baptist Church, Calcutta](#)

- [William Carey University](#), Hattiesburg, Mississippi, U.S.A.
- [Carey Baptist College](#), University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.

- Jeremiah Chaplin, "An Introductory Essay," in Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey, D.D.: Late Missionary to Bengal; Professor of Oriental Languages in the College of Fort William, Calcutta. With an Introductory Essay by Francis Wayland, D.D, President of Brown University* (Hartford: Canfield and Robins, 1837), [p. 18.](#)
- John Brown Myers, ed., *The Centenary Volume of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1892* (London: The Baptist Missionary Society, 1892), [Title Page.](#)
- George Smith, *Life of William Carey, Shoemaker and Missionary*, (London: Murray, 1887), ch. 2.

Expect great things from God, and attempt great things for God.

- John Overton Choules, "The Missionary a Contributor to Science and Literature," in [Christ's Messengers: Or, The Missionary Memorial](#), ed. Edward Walker, (New York: E. Walker, 1848), [pp. 330-331.](#)
- Thomas Armitage, *A History of the Baptists; Traced by Their Vital Principles and Practices, from the Time of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to the Year 1886*, Introduction by J. L. M. Curry, (New York: Bryan, Taylor, & Co., 1887), [p. 581.](#)

Attempt Great Things for God and Expect Great Things from God

- [Carey College, Sri Lanka](#)



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