



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

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DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces



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Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

The encouragement found in the Scriptures quoted below is identical with the ones Matthew includes in his gospel: **“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”** (Matthew 7:7-8)

It is a great promise! However, as I understand it from Scriptures, studies and opinion of scholars, we can see its truth only through the eyes of faith, and can build our lives on it when we are ready to accept the Creator God’s communication on it as valid and authentic.

Jesus called his disciples and all of us who followed them to believe. Not just in general, but in the goodness and all-powerfulness of God. As the authors of the Discovery Series suggest:

“Jesus asks disciples to place their faith in God’s power and to remember that the outcome of prayer is dependent on God’s ability not ours. Precisely what the disciple is to believe about the power of God is that “with him all things are possible” (10:27; 14:36).

... When we pray, we must come to God confidently believing that “with him all things are possible.” He is the Creator who can restart whatever has stopped, terminate whatever has begun, or redirect anything in process.” (Page 26; - you can read this booklet if you click on the link included in the meditation below)

I have the joyful memories of answered prayers, but I also remember cases when the healing didn’t happen, and solutions hadn’t been miraculously offered. Still, I believe that God **“is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power...”** (Ephesians 3:20) The Holy One is the Almighty, Sovereign God, who is able, and who keeps his promises.

God is worthy of our trust, just as the three young men voiced it in the Book of Daniel: **“... the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not...”** (Daniel 3:17-18) That’s the conviction I would like to obtain, and that’s a goal for all of us, as modern age disciples of Jesus. Even if our prayers are not answered, we are called to continue to call onto God’s name. Because *“prayer is the expression of faith, and faith is the only means of relationship with God.”* (Discovery Series, page 32)

One of the ways of **“building each other up”** (1 Thessalonians 5:11) is encouraging one another to grow in the relationship with God. We can do this thru standing by each other when waiting on God is tough, or we don’t understand why things didn’t work out as we hoped. And also by telling one another about our experiences when our prayers were heard, affirming that it is true: with God *“all things are possible.”*

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Confident Prayer

Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?

Luke 11:11

READ Luke 11:5–13

Having tried for years to have a child, Richard and Susan were elated when Susan became pregnant. Her health problems, however, posed a risk to the baby, and so Richard lay awake each night praying for his wife and child. One night, Richard sensed he didn't need to pray so hard, that God had promised to take care of things. But a week later Susan miscarried. Richard was devastated. He wondered, *Had they lost the baby because he hadn't prayed hard enough?*

On first reading, we might think today's parable suggests so. In the story, a neighbor (sometimes thought to represent God) only gets out of bed to help the friend because of the friend's annoying persistence (Luke 11:5–8). Read this way, the parable suggests that God will give us what we need only if we badger Him. And if we don't pray hard enough, maybe God won't help us.

But biblical commentators like Klyne Snodgrass believe this misunderstands the parable—its real point being that if neighbors might help us for selfish reasons, how much *more* will our *unselfish* Father. We can therefore ask confidently (vv. 9–10), knowing that God is greater than flawed human beings (vv. 11–13). He isn't the neighbor in the parable, but the opposite of him.

"I don't know why you lost your baby," I told Richard, "but I know it wasn't because you didn't pray 'hard' enough. God isn't like that." – By **Sheridan Voysey**

REFLECT & PRAY

Father, today I bring You my needs and the needs of others, confident that You'll hear and answer, and grateful that it's Your goodness and not my words that count. Amen.

If the neighbor in the parable represents God, what does it suggest God is like? If verses 11–13 clarify the parable, what then is God like?

Read about the power of prayer at DiscoverySeries.org/Q0740.

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Some believers in Christ struggle with the apparent promises of Luke 11:9–10. It seems that Jesus is offering a blank check that we present to God in prayer, assuming He must grant our requests. Christ's words, however, may be a hyperbole—an extreme exaggeration to prove a point. Jesus clarifies the point He's making when He describes the heart of His Father (vv. 11–13). The heavenly Father loves us deeply and desires the very best for us—which must be defined by Him and not by us. This means that when we go to God in prayer, we can be assured His responses will always be trustworthy. – By **Bill Crowder**

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