

When Jesus' disciples asked him about prayer, he gave them a model prayer, the Lord's Prayer. Then he told them a parable that urges persistence and dogged determination in prayer. In our relationship with God, we are to keep at it, keep attempting to be attentive to the incursions of God into our lives.

Luke 11:1-13 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.'" Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'" Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. "So I say to you: 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; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Reflections

Many years ago I decided to teach myself to knit. My mother-in-law is an expert knitter, and her stunning, finely detailed creations fueled my interest. Unfortunately, she also lived 1600 miles away, in Colorado, and so was mostly unable to really help me in the way that a beginner needs guidance. I didn't know back then that yarn shops are full of people who are more than willing to help, and none of my friends were into fiber arts. Left on my own, I bought a step-by-step book which walked me through the basics. It was rough going at first – I found the illustrations and explanations very confusing, and put my needles and yarn away more than once in utter frustration. I don't know what drove me to continue – whether it was sheer obstinance, or the noble wish to create beautiful, handmade garments. For whatever reason, I stuck with it. I was so proud of my first completed project, a tiny sweater for my new baby. As the years went on, I persisted in learning more about this art, found others who shared my interest, and my skills improved. But as with anything, there were sometimes frustrations. One of the funny stories often told within my family is about the first time I tried knitting with more than

one color. A pattern for a world map sweater caught my eye – a big challenge for someone new to colorwork. I was determined, though, and I thought all was going so well until I showed my husband the first half of the front of the sweater. He gently pointed out to me that I'd somehow placed Brazil on the west coast of South America; I had misinterpreted the pattern, and done the exact reverse of what I should have done! For a few moments I considered abandoning the whole project. Instead, my dear husband helped me unravel the whole thing, and the next day, I began again. Several months later I had a beautiful new sweater.

This life provides abundant opportunities for endurance training, most with much greater significance than a knitting project. Troubles can seem overwhelming at times, and it can require a lot of discipline to return consistently to the practices we know are so vital to spiritual health. An unexpected blow, someone hurts you...it's easy to move into dark places. As I step out each day to do the work that God has put before me, I rest in the knowledge that He is always with me, wrapping me in His mercy, grace, and love. He's my biggest fan, hoping more than anyone that I will succeed in carrying

out what He has planned for me. Regardless of how I mess up or what anyone else thinks of me, He's in my corner. He didn't promise that life would be easy, but He did say He'd always be with us as long as we're with Him. So, in whatever my circumstances, I persevere in my faith by turning to Him constantly in prayer, by reading scripture every day, and seeking wise counsel when I need it. When others disappoint me, I work toward peace with them so I'm not distracted from good work by a negative situation. Recently, I have been trying to live more in the present moment, learning about meditation in the hope that my life will become more filled with God's plans and less with my own. I want to grab hold of God's grace fully, and live in the freedom that He promised! Life presents so many challenges, and I am so grateful for the faith that gives me the courage to keep going.

Persisting with learning to knit has enabled me to create unique and beautiful gifts for myself and for my friends; persisting in living in God's grace will bring everlasting rewards.

Colleen Palmateer

Many thanks to Fern Nerhood who was the author of last week's Readings & Reflections. A formatting error inadvertently cut off the author line before printing.

Readings

Don't have a Bible? Access these scriptures at biblegateway.com.

Sunday July 29

Luke 11: 1-13 Jesus taught the disciples how to pray and encouraged them to persist in prayer. How persistent are you in letting God be involved in your life?

Monday July 30

John 15: 1-9 What does this scripture teach about persevering in faith? How fruitful are you these days?

Tuesday July 31

Hebrews 12:10-12; Psalm 139: 23-24 How have you experienced God's discipline? How does today's reading encourage you?

Wednesday August 1

James 5: 7-12; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Is there someone in your life who is enduring a rough time? How can you help them?

Thursday August 2

1 Peter 3: 7-22 In this passage, Peter gives us sound advice for living and points out that we're all equal partners – heirs – to God's grace. Christ died for every one of us, even the aggravating, rude, thoughtless, and hurtful people; even that person you can't stand! How would persistently viewing people through this lens change your way of relating to others?

Friday August 3

Romans 5: 1-5; Philippians 3: 10-16 With what are you struggling right now? What hope can you take from these passages?

Saturday August 4

Psalms 37 Let this psalm be a prayer that guides and encourages you today.

Let's Serve & Invite!

Check out this spot for simple ideas you can use at work and at play, on your own and with your family, to encourage others in the name of Jesus.

Pray for your divine appointment

On the way to work or on an errand, pray for God to show you someone you can help with His love in a simple way. Then be on the look out and respond!

Who's beside you?

Consider how you can encourage someone God puts right along side you. Buy lunch for the person ahead of you in line. Pay the toll for the person driving up behind you. Little things done for the pleasure of God become mighty acts of faith to make a difference in someone's life.

Got a suggestion?

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