

## Taking Faith to the Mat

by Harold & Bette Gillogly

Faith lessons are usually painful ones. We don't know why it is, but most of us have to take them to the mat and wrestle with them for a while before they become part of us. Maybe faith comes easy for you. It never has for us. But we keep wrestling with faith, because we want it. Like the father who pleaded with Jesus to heal his son, we cling to God and cry, "I believe. Help my unbelief!"

We're on the mat right now, in the middle of another wrestling match. Actually, we're hoping it's more like the *end* of the match. We're straining to hear the final bell. And in the process we are learning once more that *...without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists [that He is who He says He is] and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.* (Hebrews 11:6 NIV)

### God is Always at Work

Verse one of that same chapter (the great Faith Chapter) starts with, *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.* Faith is the firm conviction that what we **can not** see is just as real as what we **can** see. That makes perfect sense when you consider that the *...Father is always at his work* (John 5:17). We don't often see what He is doing, but we have the assurance from Jesus' own lips that whether we can see Him at work or not, He **is** at work.

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In fact, God made the universe – all the **visible** world around us – out of

**invisible** nothing (verse 2). If He can speak a world into existence (Poof!) – then **He can speak the answers to our needs into reality** when we earnestly seek Him.

We wanted to learn more about how to earnestly seek Him, so we recently worked through a study on prayer.\* During the first two days of the study, we had the assignment of writing out our "heart cry." Here it is: "Oh, Lord, please remove the burden of debt that has hampered us and bowed us down and kept us from being completely free to minister. Help us see clearly what you would have us do; and have the faith to do it."

### How the Wrestling Match Got Started

One morning during that first week of the prayer study, we were at our dining room table praying our heart cry, when the doorbell rang. It was a real estate man informing us that the VA was auctioning off the house next door at a price well below market value. He asked if we knew anyone who might be interested in bidding on it. We both shook our heads, "Nope, not a soul." And went back to prayer.

**When we pray, we should look for God's answer and make the connection when it comes.**

Wait a minute. Should we make a connection here? We knew enough to know that when we pray, we should look for God's answer and make the connection when it comes. So we asked the real estate agent to come back over and talk with us about it. He and his wife, the real estate team of

Harold and Betty, (No kidding! That's really their names.) sat down with us and laid it all out. We saw that if we could buy the house for such a good price and turn around and sell it, we could wipe out a large portion of our debt in one fell swoop. We prayed about it and together decided this *might* be God at work answering our heart cry. But it was so scary!

### One Small Step for Man. One Giant Step for....

Oh, O.K., we will take a teeny weeny step of faith and put in a bid on the house... a very low bid. It couldn't possibly win anyway. Oh...it did? Yeh, but we'll never get financing. We can barely afford our own house, much less an investment property.

**God answers the prayers of His children who know they are helpless.**

One mortgage broker told us what we needed was a "no income, no asset loan." At first, we thought she was making fun of us, but that was what we needed, all right. There was no way we could qualify for the loan without God pulling a lot of strings. He did! We closed escrow on the house, April 10, 2001.

### Helpless and Impossible

*What is impossible with men is possible with God.* (Luke 18:27) We knew we were helpless. We could not **make** financing happen for us. We learned through this process that it's not just the big problems we are helpless to fix. Let's face it, most of us have the attitude that says: "I've got this part of my life under control. I

## Faith (con't)

don't need Your help here, Lord. I'll handle this stuff, and You handle the big stuff." But God answers the prayers of His children who **know they are helpless**. And, folks, we are all helpless to do *anything good* by ourselves. When we recognize and confess this, we free God to work mightily in our lives, and He gets great glory.

### Praise...Pray...and Never Give Up

We thank Him for the two families from our Sunday School class who came over and helped us clean and paint and get the house ready to sell. We continue to praise Him, because we saw Him work miracle after miracle on our behalf. Only God could have orchestrated this whole complicated chain of events. So we wait expectantly for what He's going to do next.

As we write this, the house has been on the market one-and-a-half months. Some days it's hard to wait expectantly. Some days you will find us back on the mat, wrestling with faith...and doubt. We believe God wants to place a Christian family next door to partner with Him, and with us, in winning our cul-de-sac to Christ. We've had two offers, both from pastors' families, but neither has worked out.

Jesus told a parable once to show us we ...*should always pray and not give up*. (Luke 18:1-8) Let's look at it, because we know this is the only way we can win the wrestling match – by always praying and never giving up. The parable is about a helpless widow who keeps pleading with an uncaring and godless judge to grant her justice against her adversary. The judge finally gives in and grants her request because he is sick and tired of her bothering him.

**God loves us and will bring about justice for us IF we keep crying out to Him.**

Then Jesus points out that God stands in stark contrast to the uncaring judge, and promises that ...*God will bring about justice for those who cry out to Him day and night. He will act quickly*. (Luke 18:7 NASB) Many times, when God does not act as quickly as we want Him to, we think He is being mean to us like the uncaring judge in the parable, and we stop crying out to Him. But that is satan's lie! God loves us and will bring about justice for us IF we keep crying out to Him.

### Will He Find Faith?

Jesus finishes His commentary with

...*when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?* (verse 8b) We want Him to find faith in us. Don't you?

Will God bring the right buyer to us, sell the house and help us get out of debt? We believe He will! When and How? We don't know. But as long as **He** knows what He is doing, it really isn't necessary that **we** know what He is doing. Our job is not to *know*. Our job is to *believe*. To *believe that He is who He says He is, and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him*.

In the meantime, He is strengthening our faith as we exercise our faith muscles with all this wrestling. And maybe He is even allowing *these light and momentary troubles to achieve for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all*. (2 Corinthians 4:17)

We will let you know the "rest of the story" when this exciting episode of faith is finished. We'll post it on the website and include it in our monthly email newsletter.

*\*Oh, God, Please! The Heart Cry of a Burdened Soul* by Leighann McCoy, available through Thompson Station Church, Thompson Station, TN Phone: 615-791-8319.

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