



WONDER IN ALL

God is Not Like This

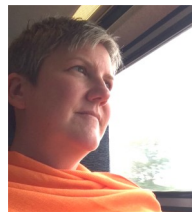
a reflection by
Stephanie Gurnsey Higgins

The first thing I remember learning in graduate school was that feedback, like presents, says more about the giver than the receiver. The thesis of the article was that people focus on what they want to achieve and not the information their team needs in order to do the best work. *I did not like this.* I took it personally and I pushed back against this idea for the entire semester. None of the professors pressed me and quietly, on my own, after a lot of wrestling I reached the conclusion that it was true.

Clearly a little stumbling didn't hurt me as I worked through my own stubbornness, and it left a lasting impression. What I learned from the encounter is that we only give energy to what we each take seriously or what we value. When I value my friend's interest in cooking – whether I see how happy it makes her and or maybe she and I even share recipes – I'm much more likely to give her presents that enhance her interests, and give an opportunity to expand her skills. When I don't value my friend's hypothetical interest in bowling [which is truly hypothetical because I personally enjoy bowling] I'm likely to ignore this part of her life entirely. This doesn't make me a bad friend. It just makes me human.

Jesus tells us a story of a widow who sought justice from the judge. This Gospel reading is opposite from the way Jesus normally tells parables. Most parables are about how wonderful the Kingdom of God is. Some are about how we should act and what we should do. Some are about the nature of God. This one, like a few others, is the opposite of that. **GOD IS NOT LIKE THIS, GOD IS MUCH BETTER.** This parable falls into that category. God is not like this, like all of us, is the implication.

Unlike a bad manager or even the best of friends, God is *always* interested in us, always loves us, in every way. God's wonder in all that we do and all that we are is limitless. God hears our thoughts and needs in our prayers and provides. God can handle everything we have to pray – everything. So “pray always and not to lose heart”. Our prayers are like our declaring to God where we are coming from, and no matter where that is, God is engaged, listening, caring and loving us.



Stephanie Gurnsey Higgins is the Minister for Diocesan Development and Giving for the Diocese of Virginia. She enjoys teaching congregations how to tell

their stories with narrative budgets and creating possibilities through planned giving and grants. Stephanie and her family attend St. James the Less in Ashland.

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Proper 24

Luke 18:1-8



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Reflection Questions

1. Praying shapes our believing. What type of prayer brings you closest to God? How does God speak to you?
2. What nugget from a class, a sermon, or a piece of advice have you carried throughout your life?
3. When has your own stumbling revealed more than your success?
4. What is God “not” to you?

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