

## Prayer Journey: Beginning The Adventure

**Text:** Psalm 63:1-8

Here is a story of three pastors who went on fishing trip together. They were in the boat and the Anglican pastor said, "Oh! No! I left the bait on shore!" So he got out of the boat and walked on the water to the shore to get them. The Methodist pastor exclaimed, "My goodness, such faith, and to think that we were in bible school together!"

Once the Anglican pastor had gotten back into the boat, the Presbyterian pastor said, "Oh no! I left our drinking water on shore too!" And like the Anglican pastor, he exited the boat and walked on the water ashore to get what he needed.

The Methodist pastor yelled, "This can't be!" And he decided to give it a try. He stepped out of the boat and *Plop!* he sank right into the water. Wasting no time, the other two had to pull him out seconds before he drowned.

At this point, the Anglican pastor told the Presbyterian pastor, "I think we had better tell him where the rocks are."

There is a tendency in us to make comparisons regarding our spirituality. In our eyes, everyone else around us seems to be a spiritual giant. In prayer, there are no giants. No matter what our experiences may have been, *all of us are still learning to pray*. As we embark on our church-wide study of the Workbook of Living Prayer in the next six weeks, it is on this note we begin our retreat of prayer, and our journey of watching and waiting on the Lord.

## 1. Prayer is a Natural Seeking

Psalm 63 describes very naturally and beautifully what prayer is.

**Verse 1:** *O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*

Prayer is expressed by the psalmist in simple and direct words: *O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you.* In the same way, let us acknowledge that God is there and seek Him with our hearts.

The psalmist longing for God in this verse is depicted as a man in a dry and weary land thirsting for water. Man is very much a spiritual being. In the core of our beings, there is a desire to connect with God.

We look at gifted, successful and famous celebrities. Materially speaking, they have everything, yet some of them still end up living destructive lives. Without God, we fall into a state of spiritual emptiness.

I know of an atheist who was an engineer in his forties. When he contracted cancer, he lamented, "Life is unfair! Where is justice and meaning? Where is God?"

Augustine once said, "For thee were we made, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee." Augustine recognised that we are spiritual beings. God created us in His image. Fundamentally, we are people who need to connect with God.

**Application:** Prayer is thus, simply connecting with God. We can relate to God in a variety of ways – in word, song, silence or actions. We do not realise it – but prayer is a natural seeking after the Lord. Some of us may feel lost and not know where to start. Let us take small steps in this adventure of prayer. Start from where you are, make sense of it and acknowledge the risen Christ is here with you. And you will soon discover your friendship with God growing, deepening, and strengthened.

## 2. Prayer is Seeking in Truth

**Verse 2-3:** *I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.*

We want to seek God in the truth of who He is. We need a right understanding of who God is. We can relate with God anytime or place but we may not possess the truth about Him because of our past – it can be our pagan beliefs, or a lack of a positive parent or authority figure in our lives; it can be our emotional baggage - our doubts, fears and insecurities.

These may give rise to misconceptions of who our Father God is. We may perceive Him as a slave-driver who places huge demands on our sacrifices. We may view Him as a celestial accountant who watches our every move, keeps score and ensures we pay back our dues. Do these misconceptions affect how we relate to or serve God?

**Application:** Let us dispel unfounded but real misconceptions that hold us back from a true view of God. Let us seek biblical truth that will set us free - truths such as God is our Heavenly Father who gave His Son for us; God is the Good Shepherd who laid His life down for us; God is the God of power, glory and love; God is loving, gracious and merciful.

## 3. Prayer is Seeking at All Times

**Verses 4-8:** *I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night.*

*Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. My soul clings to you; Your right hand upholds me.*

We seek God not just on Sundays or the half an hour worth of Quiet Time. The psalmist worships God all the time - *as long as he lives and through the watches of the night.*

Prayer is natural to us but we recognise it does not come easy, firstly because of our fallen nature. We may start the day with good and holy intentions but once we hit the road, we become aggressive with road rage. Secondly, we live in a fallen world; a selfish, godless and anti-Christ culture that repel us from the things of God. Thirdly, we need to unlearn ungodly habits that have been sown into our lives over the years. To help us overcome our weaknesses and seek God constantly, we need discipline and community.

**Application:** Like what a good diet and exercise regime does to cure a serious illness, discipline helps us to keep our focus on the Lord. We can practise spiritual disciplines such as meditation, devotions, or keeping a prayer journal. God calls us the Body of Christ. God's community of family and friends is also important to support, encourage, or remind us of our commitment to seek the Lord together.

In summary, prayer is coming together and acknowledging that we need God. Prayer is a natural response of our hearts, and we should cultivate this spontaneous desire within us to seek the Lord. We seek God in the truth of who He is. He takes delight in us and loves us so much. We purpose to seek God all the time by committing our lives to personal discipline and expressing accountability to the community of God. May this journey of coming away and spending luxurious times of prayer with the Lord in the coming season be the start of a beautiful spiritual adventure for you and me.

- Rev Lim Jen Huat