

In Everything, Pray

Text: Philippians 4:6-8

I once received a prayer chain e-mail with the subject, "One Minute for God". The sender, whom I was not even acquainted with, asked me to pray the Lord's Prayer for him in a minute and then forward the message to my friends to pray the same prayer for me; and in turn, they can pass on the message to others to pray for them. This made me wonder if prayer to the sender was like a tap where one could turn it on and easily fill a basin up with water. Or, was prayer like a balloon where you could instantly inflate it by pumping it up with helium? What is your idea of prayer like?

Relationship in Christ

I would like to begin by saying that prayer is not a magic wand or formula. Our relationship with Christ has to do with intimacy, so prayer ought to be viewed in the context of this close relationship – who we are as children of God, why we are committed to Him, and essentially, how we communicate with Him. As we operate out of this relationship with our Lord Jesus, we are mindful of three principles we can live by: reside in our Father's world, respond to God always, and recognise God's touch in our lives.

1. Reside in our Father's world

Do not be anxious about anything... (Philippians 4:6a)

It is important for us to reside in our Father's world, free of anxiety. Let us adopt a godly worldview of relating to God as our provider and loving Father. Jesus said Matthew 6:25: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?" God is sovereign over our lives, even with regard to our enemies. Paul the apostle says: "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"

says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink..." (Romans 12:19-20)

The secular worldview is godless. In the name of survival, everyone fights for their space, rights and future. The *kiasu* Singaporean is always ensuring how he can be ahead of his rivals. Second place is not good enough. All these godless pursuits cause anxiety, even for the secular Christian. God is our heavenly Father. Enter into His presence and "cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7) Desire for a God-consciousness. Connect with the Lord through your devotions, grace, morning and evening prayers. Reside in His world constantly.

2. Respond to God always

...but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6b)

It is fruitful to respond to God always, whether we are in need, pain, joy or fear. The Psalms are about men of God who pray in all circumstances: prayers filled with petition, thanksgiving, questions and even complaints. Is there anything we can't approach our heavenly Father for? If we then, though we are evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will our Father in heaven give the best to us? (Luke 11:13)

We are asked to pray all kinds of prayers, but what about bold and "difficult" prayers? Many of us may be afraid of praying for healing and miracles, for fear of putting God in a spot. We would rather pray "safe" prayers, which we are assured God would answer. God can stand on His own. We should never be fearful of bringing our petitions to Him. Even if our prayers seem unanswered, God will direct us on a journey of knowing Him more – there will be room for grace and growth in His kingdom.

Thus, let us grow to know God through the prayers we pray, within the boundaries of the love, trust and hope we have in Him. Let us recognise 'God incidents' and ask Him: "What are you saying to me?" Keep a prayer journal and account of your prayer journey.

3. Recognise God's Touch

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

God is real. It is important to know that He relates to us and touches us. It is hard to explain what God's touch is but it is something we can recognise when we encounter Him. God affirms His presence by saying, "I am with you." We receive an assuring peace in our hearts which is inexplicable but very experiential.

After working nearly ten years in the army, I felt the call to serve God full-time. I was called to an interview with my senior army officers. I was asked questions such as "How long will my theological studies be? Am I promised a job after my studies? How much is the pay?" My officers showed how much salary I would lose out; it appeared that I was foolish to leave the army. However, I felt a peace from God beyond understanding. God assured me I was fulfilling His will and He was with me in my journey of faith.

This is the mystery of God. He is our Creator and we, His creatures. God uses infinite, varied and creative ways to connect with us. There is no one-size-fits-all means of communication. God may use dreams, visions, words, thoughts and impressions. For us, our personality, gifting, disposition, maturity or the lack of, play a part in how we respond to God. It is vital to be open and practise listening to God and learn how He speaks. He will pour into our lives great blessings, and His peace will be evident.

In conclusion, let us remain in an intimate relationship with Christ. Let us live in God's worldview and respond to Him in all circumstances. As we remain in Christ, we will learn to recognise God's response and receive His special touch on our lives.

- Rev Lim Jen Huat