

Praying With A σκούπα

Book Excerpts

The title of this book, Praying with a σκούπα came out of the crazy prayers I made in that house in Cyprus. As part of the chores, I sweep the large compound every morning. Being a tropical girl there were days that I didn't feel like stepping outside into the cold weather to sweep. But over time I saw that I could not wait for the day to break for me to take my σκούπα. The time I swept and the sound of the σκούπα were my most prayer time of the day.

During my one and half years stay in that job. I learnt so many important lessons besides all the blessings am enjoying today. And as you join me to pray I want to share these lessons I learnt in Cyprus with you.

-I learnt the tremendous power behind letting go self-reliance and letting God take over. I saw myself in a powerful system of cold suppression and intimidation. Every housemaid I talked to seem to be going through the same suppression yet few were prepared to take action. It was at that instance that I called on God to come through for me. I told him I could not fight the forces that had established the conditions in the housemaid job, and he did.

-I learnt the lesson of making the best out of a worse situation. Anytime I called my Auntie who found me the job to complain she will say to me. "Yaa, I know what you are going through but if you will take your eyes off the present situation and fix it on God, everything will be all right". At the end of the period and through continuous prayers, I found out that the worst job brought the most growth spars spiritually than any other time in my Christian life.

-I learnt the lesson of the Power in praise. The Psalmist says, God inhabit in the praises of his saints. My cousin and I chose to praise and thank God in our situation. We chose the path of great writers like Pearl Norman, Carothers Merlin and many other great writers who had tried and proven the power behind praise and worship. We prayed our frustrations in praise and so we were never down spirited. When we choose to pray in praises, the spirit of God draws near to us. His presence in your life will change you. And when the changes come in you, you will no longer see the worse situation but you will see only God and so will delight yourself in him.

-I learnt the lesson of cutting the chain of grumbling and murmuring. Although there are so many quotations that cautioned us of the dangers of grumbling I never get to master it. Some writers say that because of grumbling, the Israelites stayed on the wilderness for 40 years, I learnt to stop grumbling when I went to work in Cyprus. In my quest for answers and all my whys, I came across lot of scriptures that show that grumbling is a detestable thing to God. It is the same as unbelief. And when I chose to stop grumbling and pray to acknowledge his presence in every situation of my life, he came through for me. When we begin to pray and let go the canker of grumbling, the Holy Spirit will empower us to operate and retain energy. We will begin to operate on low voltage in the way we expand our energy through worrying and therefore reduce emotional outburst which most of the time sap out our energy.

-I learnt the lesson of who a parent is and much more who God is to me. In my book Celebrating God, I narrated a story related to how my childhood was like. I went through a rough hand while growing up. This upbringing also gave me a sense of who God is. Kind of who my parents were. Every day of my life I choose to believe that God loves me not based on what I have been through, but based on what he did on the cross for me. If not so then I will feed on the subconscious sense of how stupid, destructive and useless I heard many many times in my home. I had a vivid idea of who a parent is, the idea of a parent was not very charming to me. All I knew was, a parent who punishes condemns, abuses, finds fault and revolts. For the first six years of my life as a parent, am afraid that was exactly how I handled those little angels God placed into my life. My prayers every day is that, my children will have a heart to forgive me. So now I found myself in this home in Cyprus.

- I learnt the lesson of running the winning race Paul talked about, so that one day I could be crowned. I went to a Presbyterian school and love that old hymnal by Rev. George Bennard

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross

The emblem of suffering and shame

And I love that old cross where the dearest and best

For a world of lost sinners was slain

So I will cherish the old rugged cross

Till my trophies at last I lay down

I will cling to the old rugged cross

And exchange it someday for a crown.

I yearned for a father who will call me Yaa mou. For the first time I didn't want to be just a servant in the kingdom of God. I saw the position and treatment meted out to servants in a home and I needed to change my status in heaven. I prayed, worshiped, composed songs and poems as an art of worship. My condition in that home did not change over time but I refused to give up. One of the songs I sang everyday was;

“Thank you Jesus for opening my eyes to see the position of children in a home

I yearned to be a child too in your kingdom

I have come with all my burdens

Please Daddy bless me and restore my daughtership status

I will live the rest of my life proclaiming your goodness to everyone”

I sang this song not once but the entire nine months prayer contract. And God in his goodness took me out of the house.

Looking back I can say that the situation I found myself in, in Cyprus was worse. The nature of the job robbed me of all my personal dignity. It took away my joy and freedom and set me on the path of depression. But I am bold and confident to say that if there were any situation that made my faith grow in Christ Jesus, it was that one and half years that I worked as a housemaid. The changes came only when I took a decision to pray. Will you?

I believe lots of us as Christians know that God has a purpose for our lives; there are few of us who go that extra mile to put our prayer cup on. Lot of us are waiting for an angel to appear or our pastor to pray for us and turn our situation around overnight. If you are with in that group of people, I am sorry to inform you that you have a long way to wait for that miracle to happen. Jim Cymbala, the celebrated Author of *When God's People Pray*, puts it this way, “ what God can do Prayer can do” start today. God is ever ready to grant your request according to his will. His will is to make you sons and daughters of his enviable kingdom and it starts right from the day you take that decision to know him. Try it.

Chapter Three

And so I urge you: carry on an ongoing conversation with God about the daily stuff of life, ... For now, do not worry about “proper” praying, just talk to God. ~ Richard J. Foster

Marriage And Prayer

In the area of marriage, lots of us face challenges that make us shudder. Before I tackle the issue of marriage and prayer, I want to state that I am not a marriage expert. Much more the trend of my marriage life is no good example. But I am passionate about taking every area of your life to God in prayer, including your marriage. If I look back I am not proud to record here some challenges my marriage has taken me through.

Growing up, I had a vague idea of how marriage runs, neither was I sure if I wanted to marry. I never followed the golden rule of sex after marriage. My parents had never entertained any man they saw in my life. For numerous times my parents humiliated and threatened all the men I dated and slept with. I wanted so much to abstain from sex until I got married but it never happened. When I met my husband he told me he wanted to marry me. I managed to tell my parents, but they said no with capital N .It was not a new thing to me so I didn't give up. For five years we struggled to get my parents to sit and accept the bride prize with no success. Within these five years I gave birth to my first son. My partner

and I decided to go to court and register the marriage. We did. But as tradition and church norms demanded, we still have to present the marriage before my family. It took series of arbitrators including his Lordship the most Reverend, Arch-Bishop Palmer Buckle to get my parents to resend their decision. And it took continued targeted prayers to get a break through. I remember one time my prayer partner, Millicent, after we returned from a prayer meeting told me, “Yaa, everything is going to be well. God is going to shake up your family. When that happens the way shall be cleared for you”. It did happen within a six months period. One day from nowhere my father sent a word to my husband to come and pay the bride prize.

Sometimes it is so frustrating when God doesn't come through for us. I always have a problem with God over that. After all he knows what we need before we ask, why will he always wait for us to ask before he gives us what we need. He says just so we will know that he did it and we will come to give him his glory. And when he comes in, he makes all things beautiful to himself. What I have found out is, in every relationship, there is always a third party who wishes for the downfall of that unity. The unity between you and your friends, your children, your parents, your siblings, your church family and especially, your spouse. There is someone somewhere who is working around the clock to destruct the bond.

He started long time ago in the Garden of Eden, working through the serpent, to thwart the plan of God for mankind. Through and out of all generations he has worked hand in hand with entities to carry out his plans. Today in your relationship, he can use your mind field, your wife, your in-laws your friends, your job or even your church to bring you down. Jesus said, “Watch and pray”. If there is any kind of unity that expresses the reality of God's love, it is your marriage therefore your attackers will not rest until it is destroyed. Our only weapon in this world is our relationship with the one who said, I have overcome the world so do not worry. Bring all your anxieties to me for I care. To remind you again, your relationship with Christ will bring you your soul's yearnings, and when you discover what you are made of as a child of God, you will be in a better position as the Holy Spirit inspires you to face the daily challenges. This also comes only by prayer.

Marriage as we all know is a sacred institution before God, therefore he watches over it if you choose to take it to him through prayer. I see that the two people in the marriage stand upright or condemned with whatever they use their marriage bond for. Jesus said we don't marry in the new world to come but I believe that our marriage can also prevent us from entering the kingdom of God. Over the years I have come to understand that, it takes a deliberate demonstration of unconditional love to make it work. As human as we are, we are not perfect, marriage, do not make us perfect either, rather when we choose to do it with God as our guide, our marriage, like the cycles in a year, will winters and summers our love. It will not always work out right but you will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to take one day at a time.

In my case, I defied all sound evidence and advice and even the popular quotation in Ephesians 6, that children should obey their parents, went ahead and married my husband. What I didn't know then was that I was placing my marriage in the spotlight of both humans and spirits. I placed my marriage in the lobby room so to speak. My parents were expecting an extraordinary man in my husband. They thought he will take me to see the moon. As the years went by they greeted every little problem in my marriage with hostility and pointed it to my face- we said it, we knew this marriage will not work. For fifteen years now, I choose to love my husband as Christ has told us to.

Today as I write, if am given the same chance to choose a man for myself as a husband, I will still choose him. But if the same condition presents itself again I will do it differently. I will pray and ask God for directions. It is the only difference. I fought my marriage battle all by myself and as a result became bitter and sick. Today I meet every challenge in my marriage with prayer, and wow! what a big difference.

It may not matter so much where you started from, it will matter very well if you are willing to complete the rest of your marriage life with God. Pray for your marriage, pray for your partner, pray that if you ever have to stand before God, you will never be found guilty based on the kind of marriage life you have today.

God bless you as you pray.

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