

See God in Everything

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Our God creates and sustains this magnificent world. He is in *everything!* I want to be constantly aware of seeing Him, looking for Him, and recognising Him in *all* things – from the creation around me to my own, personal life.

I remember as a teenager on a Truth for Youth camp, our Youth Leader would play a game similar to “I spy with my little eye”, but instead of picking the first letter of something he saw, he would name the object, and we would have to come up with biblical references to that thing, such as cloud, the colour purple, or an acacia tree. Of course, it became a competitive ‘knowledge’ rivalry, but the concept was to relate everything we saw to something in scripture. Apart from sharpening our memory skills, it taught me to look for God in everything we see or do.

When I see birds – their beauty, just for me to see – I think of Him and I think of where birds are written about in scripture or are symbolic of something. When I learn from my children, or see a child dependent on their parent, it reminds me that *I* am a child of God and how blessed I am to part of His family. When I see a sheep or a boat or a donkey or a leek or red wine or a coat or a mountain or a hand or someone’s eyes..., I have learned to be alert and aware of what God is showing me and teaching me. It’s a different outlook or attitude to life.

In order for me to remember a verse, or think of a scriptural connection or association, I have to have that knowledge in my head to start with. This obviously takes time – studying, listening, meditating, reading, and praying. Just like the wise and foolish virgins had to take time to crush olives for oil and trim their wicks to prepare their lamps, it takes *time, effort* and, above all, a *desire* to look for God and Jesus in our daily lives.¹

I have come to firmly believe that my Father is actively involved in *everything* I do – both in the big things and in the small, inconsequential things. I find it incomprehensible that a God

¹ Matthew 25:1-7

whom I'm blessed to call Abba Father and who loves me more than I am able to understand or imagine, would be – or even *could* be – disinterested or uninvolved in my life.²

For some people, this may seem so obvious, but for others “time and chance happens to everyone.”³ I think that trusting the LORD with *all* my heart, not depending on my own understanding, and seeking His will in all that I do, God *will* show me which path to take – in *everything* – however big or small.⁴ I agree with David when he said to God:

You have examined my heart

and you know everything about me.

You know when I sit down or stand up.

You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.

You see me when I travel

and when I rest at home.

You know everything I do.

You know what I am going to say

even before I say it.

You go before me and follow me.

You place your hand of blessing on my head.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,

too great for me to understand!

I can never escape from your Spirit!

I can never get away from your presence! (Ps 139:1-7, NLT)

I grew up with the notion that our prayers are based on the structure of the Lord's Prayer – sort of a checklist of things to include in a prayer – and, as a child, there was not much personal impact but more a global, remote outworking of God's plan in my life and the world. Today, I find such distant, impersonal praying quite difficult, as it appears more and more to me to be an

² Romans 8:16; Ephesians 3:20

³ Ecclesiastes 9:11

⁴ Proverbs 3:5-6

intellectual and verbal expression rather than *heartfelt groans* that cannot be expressed.⁵ If I am walking and living and doing and saying *everything* in the presence of my Father – with my King beside me – then I am sharing with them the minutiae of *every* day as well as the big changes that occur.

I haven't come to this point quickly or easily. It has been a gradual realisation of the length and breadth and height and depth of His love, which I only really began to appreciate when I became a parent myself.⁶ The strength of the love and protective feelings I have for my three sons made me wonder: *If a mere human being can love a child so much, then unfathomable in its vastness is the love that the Creator of the Universe (and of every child) must have.* My expression of love is so small in comparison to the extravagance of His love. So, if *I*, as a parent, care for *my* children and don't give them stones and snakes, but encourage and guide and assist and involve myself with them (as much as they will allow), how much more will our *Father* give us good gifts to bring us to His kingdom, if we ask Him?⁷ He wants me there so desperately that He even allowed Jesus to be tortured to show me how much He loves me.⁸

Another way of looking at this great gift is to realise how exciting it is to have this privilege of God as a loving, caring Father and what it means to me on a daily basis. *God loves me.* He knows my name.⁹ He wants to be with me in my ups and downs.¹⁰ He wants to know everything I do and say and think, so I tell Him in an ongoing conversation in my head and heart through the day.

In Each Day

I visualise Him walking down the hospital corridor with me and sometimes I beg Him to hold my hand because I can't do this anymore, and I remember, *I can do ALL things through Christ*

⁵ Romans 8:26

⁶ Ephesians 3:18

⁷ Matthew 7:9-11

⁸ Romans 5:1-11

⁹ Exodus 33:17; Isaiah 43:1

¹⁰ Psalm 139:1-4

*who strengthens me.*¹¹ It doesn't matter how big or small, I can do it through and with His strength. Or I think, *All things work together for good to them that love Him* – not *some* things, or *big* things, but *everything*.¹²

Please don't think this means that only good things happen to those who love Him. I think it means everything *works* together for my good – my spiritual good. And no trials for the present seem pleasant, but rather painful.¹³ Since I believe God loves me and wants me in His Kingdom, I am learning to be content with whatever situation He puts me in.¹⁴

Another example of how I have experienced God in the everyday, was when I bought an optometry practice. I believed it was a gift from God. It was *His* optometry practice, and I was managing it for Him. Every patient who came through the door was a gift for which I said, *Thank you*. Every time I had to pay accounts, I would pray and there was always just enough money in the bank to pay the bills. That computer sure got to hear many a prayer of gratitude! It's not always stress-free when one has staff to support and loans to pay, but I always trusted that God would guide and bless. I also tried to think of every patient who sat in the examination chair as if they were Jesus. If the King of the world was sitting in my chair, I would do the best, most thorough, eye examination possible. I would be as kind and patient and respectful so that:

in as much as you have done it unto the least of these my brethren you have done it unto me.
(Mt 25:40)

Obviously, in your life, the situation is different, but the principle is the same. *Every* person you interact with could be 'one of the least of these, my brethren' which means you're doing it for Jesus. What an honour! But also, it keeps me fully aware that I can't go anywhere that God isn't. The depths of the ocean, up to the heavens, in light or in dark – He is *always* there with me, holding me fast.¹⁵ It gives me a sense of strong security and comfort knowing that if He is *for* me, who can be against me?¹⁶

¹¹ Philippians 4:13

¹² Romans 8:28

¹³ Hebrews 12:11

¹⁴ Philippians 4:12

¹⁵ Psalm 139:7-12

¹⁶ Romans 8:31

While working on the Community Outreach Program Trust in South Africa, I learned to recognise how big our God is and how He touches the lives of those He loves and are doing His work. (This is a program of preaching and outreach to the poor, the fatherless and widows, and our neighbours in the community – a ‘touch in order to teach’ concept.) We met together once a week to report back on what had happened and plan for the week ahead. After opening in prayer – which was always for guidance and direction (not just for a blessing on our already-made decisions) – we would go around the table and report back on just *one* “God moment” in our week, *one* instance where we had seen the Father working directly in our lives or the project. Sometimes it was hard to limit ourselves to just one!

One of the God moments was when the city council person attending a meeting was not the person we had asked to meet with, but God had sent the perfect person, with the right knowledge and connections for the request that we had. The list of examples is endless and every week we were all *amazed* at the power of His love and generosity. We quickly realised that we could think big – *outrageously big* – and be blown away by the outpouring of the Father’s grace:

I’ll open the windows of heaven and there will be so much you cannot store it. (Mal 3:10)

We set goals for His honour and glory, and we all grew more in faith and passion and excitement for Him and His work. So you can well understand that when my husband, Mark, had his employment moved to Sydney, Australia, I was absolutely devastated to be leaving all this behind.

In Every Step

What on earth was I going to do for God in Sydney?

I was terrified of taking my three impressionable teenage boys to a society way more liberal and progressive than South Africa’s. I didn’t want to leave my ecclesial family. I didn’t want to leave the outreach work. I didn’t want to sell my beautiful home, or the optometry practice God had given me.

We tried everything in our power to fight against the decision. We looked at other employment opportunities, but we would have had to move cities anyway. Everything we commented on to Mark’s company, they merely offered more money to fix until it was embarrassing. Every way we turned, we felt like God was blocking us. We were told our house

was a ‘niche market’ and it would be difficult to sell – we got *four* offers. I was told my optometry practice would be difficult to sell in the economic climate – I also got four offers. Everybody in the community (not our ecclesial members) said how hard it was going to be to go to a place where you knew nobody or the culture, but they had no idea that I had a whole network of Christadelphian family, some of whom I had already met through the mission work in South Africa.

It was so clear to me that I was ‘kicking against the pricks’ like Paul had done.¹⁷ One cannot fight against God.¹⁸ I *knew* I would lose. I can remember the specific moment on a Sunday morning when I was oblivious to the service – arguing with God and tears pouring down my face – when I realised I was being like Paul and fighting against Him. I knew I needed to be more like Abraham and leave my native country, my relatives, and my father’s family, and go to the land that God would show us and *trust* that He knew what He was doing and why.¹⁹

I still am not sure why He has brought us to Australia, but I do know for sure that He is with me each and every step of each and every day, which brings to me to my career change and how God has worked with me – and through me.

My motivation is to be Jesus to those I meet, in particular, the hands and feet of Jesus to the vulnerable, advocating for those without a voice.²⁰ I wanted (and still do want) to work with older people to fulfil part of this:

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. (Jam 1:27)

In Western society ‘widows in their affliction’ to me means any elderly person in their affliction – in marginalisation or loneliness or grief; in financial difficulty or health concerns; or in any pain or suffering.

I have never forgotten an exhortation I listened to about forty years ago when a brother said he would hate to be standing behind Mother Theresa at the judgement seat because he felt she would show him up so badly. I researched her life and motivation, and how she – like Jesus – gave

¹⁷ Acts 5:39

¹⁸ Acts 26:14

¹⁹ Genesis 12:1

²⁰ Psalm 68:5

totally of herself and her possessions, for the poor and for the dying who could never repay her. “*Do good,*” Jesus said, “*and give without expecting to be repaid.*”²¹ Mother Theresa is an example to me of an ordinary person who did extraordinary things for God. And I want to do the same.

Into the Unknown

When we came to Australia, I knew I didn’t want to re-register as an optometrist to practice here, since opening a new business in a city where you have no professional contacts or patient relationships would be very difficult. So my only option would have been to work for a chain in a shopping centre, with long hours and evening and weekend work. My family was more important to me than that, and I’m not enthusiastic about the business model of impersonal service in these chains with financial targets to meet rather than the patient’s best health care to deliver. It has always been important to me to give the best, most useful, service to the patient, rather than upselling everything to them to meet a target. So, this option was closed to me, and I have no regrets. I had loved my work because of the *people* interaction, and I was sure God would provide.

I began volunteering at Christadelphian Aged Care and did their Pastoral Care training and later was certified at college in Pastoral Care & Chaplaincy. At the same time, I got a three-morning-a-week position as a personal, private carer for a gentleman who had been injured in a car accident. Little did I know how many skills I was learning, especially patience, compassion, and understanding of aging and disabilities. I absolutely loved both jobs.

When a position became available at Christadelphian Aged Care, and my gentleman moved out of Sydney, God opened another opportunity. I worked for five years in one of the Care Homes for 100 residents that included a dementia specific unit. I did an online course to educate myself about the condition and did another short course on palliative care. These courses led to an offer by the Australian Government promoting education in aged care. I was able to complete a fully financially-supported degree in dementia care.

I had no idea at the time of accepting this offer that three years down the line I would be applying to Sydney University to study a Master of Nursing and that this free, initial Australian degree would be the grounds on which I was accepted (because my previous tertiary education was way more than ten years old).

²¹ Luke 6:35-36

God *always* has a plan, even if we don't know it at the time.²²

I managed to work full time and study full time, and my experience in aged care, disability care, and community work all dove-tailed together in a way I could *never* have foreseen. All my work experience, my life experience, and spiritual growth have met together. *All* that I am, and *all* that I have learned, and all that I *have*, I owe entirely to my God.

Paul says to only boast that we are in Christ, and Jesus says we cannot do anything of our own initiative or authority without Him.²³ Was all of this easy? *By no means!* I struggled with balancing God, family, work, church, and a social life. There were as many exuberant highs as hysterical lows. Was I spiritually on track the whole time? *Impossible in this mortal body!* My life isn't perfect, but I try to keep my eyes fixed on Jesus and where I'm going. This helps when I can't see the big picture or understand what it is that God wants me to learn.

In the Hard Times

I see God when everything works out, but that does not mean that everything has always been easy. I also see God in the hard times, too. He has kept me humble in so many ways – through violence I experienced in Africa (and the resulting PTSD), through health 'thorns in the flesh', with children (I beg for Him to touch their hearts and bring them to Himself), with economic difficulties and three retrenchments... I can go on. I have had three 'smash-and-grab' attacks, we were held at gunpoint to take our new car in our driveway when our children were babies, and we have had four house break-ins for theft.

I really struggled with my *body* responding with absolute terror and my *mind* saying, *God will never leave you nor forsake you*. I have woken in the night with heart pounding, sweating in fear, absolutely furious that I can't control my body's reactions. Where was my faith?!

I remember one occasion when my husband was away on a business trip and I had three small children to look after. We had a break-in at our home while we were at the memorial meeting. I figured someone else needed the stolen items more than I did, and at least we weren't at home when it happened, and we were physically safe. But those thoughts did not stop me

²² James 4:13-16

²³ John 15:5

feeling incredibly vulnerable that night. I went to bed clutching my Bible tightly to my chest as a physical reminder that God is always with me.

I had to learn to recognise that God created my body to react that way and that faith and love are a living, growing part of my relationship with my Father. This doesn't come fully grown. It needs to be nurtured and encouraged and supported just like any other relationship.

I think I subconsciously prefer not to dwell on the negative. There is too much pain and vulnerability there. I have been in situations I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy, but I am glad (in retrospect) I have been through them, because of what I learned. But I don't like to dig around there. It's too sore. So, I focus on the positive and move forward and leave it in the past where it belongs and keep praying to be *malleable clay* that God can use.²⁴ I want to be a vessel for honour and show the world I am proud of who I serve.²⁵

Everywhere and Always

Pretty much everywhere I go, I speak about my passion for palliative care, especially end-of-life care. I want to be with people who don't want to die alone (I've held people as they die), to be with loved ones in their grief, to show love and compassion, and to just be a supporting presence in someone's time of need. My nursing studies added to this, in that I was able to add medical help to the emotional and spiritual support training I have done.

At one student placement I told the hospital manager if she ever needed any staff, I was willing. She offered me a part-time job immediately. This led to more part-time work at a bigger hospital where my manager there said to the post-graduate recruitment team that they would be "crazy" not to employ me when I graduated. I didn't even have to apply for a position – God was guiding and showing me what path to take. I was allowed to choose which ward I wanted – palliative care, obviously! – and started in the Palliative Oncology ward.

After a year there, I started exploring other options for palliative *community* care, which is my long-term goal: to support a person to die at home (if that is their preference). I want to be there, in the home, for an inclusive experience with the whole family, giving holistic care that includes medical, social, psychological, and spiritual care. I prayed about one position I was

²⁴ Jeremiah 18:4

²⁵ 2 Timothy 2:21

particularly interested in, and after much discussion with God and my husband, we decided it wasn't the right time or place for that particular adventure.

About two days later, as I was driving to work, a woman I had met a couple of times in my nursing rang me, completely out of the blue, and offered me the *exact* job I had been telling everyone I was working towards in the long term. Wow! I was so excited that God had handed me this opportunity, unlooked-for but most definitely wanted.

So I started a new chapter in March 2023. I am working in a 19-bed hospice, training for a year and studying a specialisation in palliative care. God-willing, if Jesus isn't physically here with us, then next year I will be able to begin my community care service. I knew I was in the right place when on the first day of work, as I waited in the reception area, I noticed a big plaque indicating that the building had been constructed *To the Glory of God*. I grinned and said, *Thank you. I know I'm in the right place for You.*

Do I want to retire sometime? Not really. I don't think we ever retire from loving God and thanking Him for everything He has done for us. My work is my way of doing this for Him. As long as I have the mental and physical capacity to care, I want to continue. I dream of sitting in a rocking chair one day as an old lady, watching the beauty of creation in the ocean, but at this point, I can't imagine doing that every day.

I know My God is always with me. Jesus promised he will never leave us nor forsake us. He went on to say, "*and be sure of this: I am with you always.*"²⁶ I believe it. I have seen His work and power in action in my life, *every day*.

As Paul writes in Ephesians, Christ has made his home in my heart as I have trusted in him. My roots grow down into God's love and keep me strong. I have come to a growing understanding of how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love for me is.²⁷

I pray some of you may have been helped by my discussion of my love for my Father, and how I try to look for Him and His strength and search for His presence *continually* in everything around me – both big and small, the good and the bad.

²⁶ Matthew 28:20

²⁷ Ephesians 3:17-18