

Pray with me:

Oh Lord, Our Lord

How excellent is thy name above the earth!

We come as a humble servant

Calling on your Holy Spirit to use these lips of clay for your Glory! Amen

I remember that in the 1990's, after a serious earthquake in California, a friend of mine invited me to come to a women's retreat for a week. The retreat took place at the Pajero Dunes Condos near the beach during April. I had not traveled that much, I did not have a lot of saving, and I had never experienced an earthquake. We both prayed about it and finally concluded that a women's Christian retreat is just what the doctor ordered. I needed to make a lifechanging decision and I needed to be in a different environment among other Christian women.

I invited another friend to accompany me on the trip from Philadelphia to California. She is from Panama and a strong prayer warrior, who loves to testify about Jesus. We boarded the plane together not knowing what to expect once we arrived.

When we finally arrived at the Dunes Condos, I was so happy. As we drove through the city, we passed the aftermaths of the earthquake. It was a jaw dropping sight to see some highway bridges still in the streets, devastation of buildings and homes destroyed. Yet the cars could navigate to their destinations with little problems.

When we finally arrived, we unpacked, met the other women, participated in a worship service and ate dinner together.

Before settling in our condos, we did a tour of each other's space. The condos we visited we luxurious. The décor was beautiful in the living area and the bedrooms. Each condo had a full kitchen with dishwasher, a living area with a beautiful King size sofa and two bedrooms. One bedroom had a lovely queen bed and the other two large size twin beds.

I could not wait for my friend and I to see our condo for the week. Oh no!!!! I could not believe my eyes. The condo was the worst place anyone would want to stay on a retreat. I was horrified. The décor was horrible! There were chipped walls, and unpainted woodwork. The pictures and other hangings were barely attached to the walls. The overall color was a dusty rust color, which could have originally been beige. I was outdone! All the beds had large valleys in the mattresses. On top of all that we shared the condo with two other people who were complete strangers. Since they arrived before my friend and I they claimed the large queen size bed and one top twin. I was not having it. They had to give the queen to my friend who was on the plump side because she would not sleep well on a twin.

I could not apologize enough to my friend. I was so disappointed at that point. This could not be what the doctor ordered!

I went to sleep that first night on the sofa bed that was in the living area. Yes, I complained and fussed all night with the Lord. How could we end up with this place?

About two o'clock in the morning, I heard some shuffling feet walking toward the living room. It was my friend: the one from Panama, the prayer warrior, the one who love to talk about the goodness of the Lord. She called me and said, "Jade, I have a word from the Lord for you." Oh no!! What was it? She said, God wants you to know that he did not send you on this trip to be comfortable. He sent you to comfort his people." What a humbling word!

The atmosphere on the Dunes was very peaceful and calming. We had time to walk the shore of the beach and to meditate on the goodness of the Lord.

The next day I woke up as the sun rose. I went to the beach and sat on the sand alone. As I looked out on the ocean, I felt a peace come over me and presence which reminded me that even though I could not see any other human being on that beach, I was not alone. I began to think about how God had created us to bless and glorify God. The horizon was magnificent with the sunrise, the skyline and the ocean all blending with the beach. Yellow, blue, blue green and sand colors all blended. My response was to begin to praise God for all that he had accomplished within a day's travel. I could not contain my praise. In that moment I was reminded of God's awesomeness, goodness, and love. In that moment I began to cry out to the Lord to help me, to forgive me and to restore my soul. My song was the same as David's "I will bless the Lord at all times and his praise will continually be in my mouth."

The pericope from Psalm 34 is a praise response to how good God has been to us and a reminder of how God responds to his people when they need God's help.

This Psalm was written by David, a humble servant and talented musician. David was running for his life and hiding from Saul. Saul was threatening David's life because his popularity grew after killing the Philistine giant and growing popularity. Saul became insanely jealous of David. It is believed that while David was hiding in the cave called Adullah he wrote this eloquent acrostic song. This praise song used all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet from aleph to tav. David loved to praise with his musical instrument. No matter what struggles he was going through in the present, he gave God the glory! "I will bless the Lord at all times his praise will continually be in my mouth." To bless the Lord meant he would take a prayer posture on his knees giving perpetual blessing to the Lord. David had experienced the steadfast love and mercy of God throughout his life. As we read this Psalm we are invited to join with David when he says, "O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together." David realizes that everyone has not experienced the depth and breadth of God's love. He invites his humble readers to listen to a testimony which they can relate for all human conditions. The humble

were the weak, poor, or afflicted. We all go through times in our life when we need God's mercy and grace. The humble hear a boast. Not a boast in themselves or another human! They hear the soul boasting in the Lord and are glad. This cry to magnify the Lord calls those who are humble: the ashamed, the distressed, the persecuted, the unhappy and the vulnerable. The testimony of one "poor soul" encourages another and invites them to celebrate. The report of deliverance calls for celebration, gratefulness, thanksgiving, praise, exaltation, and glory to God. One might ask the question, "How does God bless humans?" God gives us the gift of provision, a reasonable activity of our mind and of our limbs, strength to get up and do our work, compassion during times of struggle, peace during times of grief, forgiveness, mercy, joy, and love. These are just a few gifts. I am sure you can think of many more. What can we give God that he does not already possess? We can make our soul boast in the Lord! When we boast in the Lord we acknowledge God as our strength, especially when we rejoice in the Lord. This boasting is not just for the individual and the Lord. The Psalmist hopes that all who hear his song especially the humble will join in singing and praising the God.

How do we bless the Lord? Maybe, we are not good at song writing. Maybe we have other gifts: painting, gardening, dancing, singing, photography, meeting new people and making friends. Maybe we are an encourager, a counselor to those who are less fortunate than you? Whatever way we chose to glorify God is a way of praising. We have a promise in this Psalm that the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him (reverence/honor) and delivers them. O taste and see for ourselves that the Lord is good! Experience it for ourselves, the goodness of the Lord. Let us remind ourselves how many times God has walked alongside us in a situation in which we eventually found peace?

Speaking of tasting, in the John 6: 35, 41-51 passage, Jesus said to those who were following him after the miracle of feeding the five thousand with five barley loaves and two fish, "I am the Bread of life, whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Jesus knew that the crowds were following him because he satisfied their physical need for food. They were full of his meal and could have cared less about his healings and teaching. Jesus gave them good counsel.

26 "Do not work for the food that spoils but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him has God the Father placed his seal of approval".

Bread has been a staple since the early biblical days. Breads like Ugah and Kikkar were flat breads. Rakik was a thin wafer and Hallah was a thicker loaf in which the best quality of flour was used. So, the people during those days were used to good nutritious bread for satisfying the physical body, but not until the New Testament was bread for the soul instituted at the Last Supper as the body of Christ. The body of Christ satisfied the spiritual appetite for the soul.

Let's talk a little about nutrition.

Nutrition is the study of nutrients in food, how the body uses nutrients, and the relationship between diet, health, and disease. Major food manufacturers employ nutritionists and food scientists. Nutritionists may also work in journalism, education, and research. Many nutritionists work in the field of food science and technology.

Nutrition is crucial for the growth and development of children and adolescents. A child's body uses nutrients to build strong bones, grow tall, and expand cognitive capacity.

Proper nutrition helps children prevent and fight off illness. It gives them energy and allows them to focus and learn in school.

Why is it important to understand the importance of nutrition?

Over the past few years, nutrition has taken center stage in the public eye when it comes to food quality, the great GMO debate, the USDA guidelines, and the issue of school lunches across the country. But what exactly is nutrition? According to the World Health Organization, nutrition is the intake of food in relation to the body's dietary needs.

The World Health Organization defines proper nutrition as an adequate, well-balanced diet combined with regular physical activity and that poor nutrition can lead to reduced immunity, increased susceptibility to disease, impaired physical and mental development, and reduced productivity.

Some breads are more nutritious than others.

The breads considered the most nutritious in today's market are Ezekiel bread, flaxseed bread, rye bread, oat bread, oatmeal bread, whole wheat bread, and whole grain bread. There is a lot to learn about nutritious bread. Because of allergies, when selecting look for gluten-free, sugar free, and non-gmo.

consumershealthreport.com/why-is-nutrition-important/

None of these breads are manna, the living bread, or the bread from heaven.

These are all nutritious, but the question remains "What is the most nutritious bread?" Jesus lets us know that the most spiritually nutritious bread is the bread from heaven.

But they were confused when Jesus said, "He was the bread of life." They began to ask how to work the works of God. Jesus said to them "this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he has sent."

They wanted to see signs to believe. They believed that in the wilderness of Egypt Moses fed them manna from Heaven. Jesus corrected and informed them that His Father gave them manna from heaven not Moses. He declared that He was the bread sent down from heaven.

Two problems so developed:

- 1) Is not this the son of Joseph, the carpenter and Mary (Humanity and Deity)?
- 2) No one comes to me unless drawn by my Father.

Augustine describes the drawing power of God's grace as enabling the inner palate of the soul to find its greatest pleasure and delight in partaking the truth.

Calvin wrote "The manner of drawing is not violent so as to compel us by external force; but yet, it is an effectual movement of the Holy Spirit turning us from being unwilling and reluctant into willing.

"Your ancestors ate the Manna from Heaven and died. Verily I tell you I am the bread of life. Here is the bread that comes down from Heaven which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that comes down from Heaven, whoever eats this bread will live forever."

Verily I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. Amen