



Dear Friends,

I enjoy the fortnight after Christmas. The few months before that feel frantic. Workplaces push to get as much done as possible by the Christmas shutdown. There are countless work parties, family functions and school events to attend. Shopping seems endless. There is food to buy. Gifts to purchase. Trees and homes to decorate. And there is the church community carols ...

While I am on the subject of RPC's community carols, I would like to thank the many people who volunteered to serve and attend the event. We had almost fifty children present. The bottom floor of the church auditorium was packed. God gave us wonderful opportunities to share music, food, fun activities and fellowship in Jesus' name. Above all, we were able to testify to God's gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, who came to rescue us from sin.

I digress. I appreciate the opportunities that Christmas offers to make Jesus known to the wider community. I am also thankful that life slows down after Christmas.

I like Sydney at this time of year. Roads are almost empty. Shops are deserted. People are more relaxed. They talk about the cricket or tennis, sea water temperatures or NYE fireworks.

The slower pace of the post-Christmas period provides opportunities to catch up with family and friends. For swims at the beach. For watching summer sports. It's also a good time to reflect on the year just past and on what lies ahead for 2025.

Whenever I reflect on the past year and plan for the year ahead, I often think about prayer. That is why I decided to preach a sermon series on prayer over the holiday period.

I need all the help I can get when it comes to prayer. Like my relationship to Kathryn and my family, prayer is not something I ever master. I have got to keep working at it. I liken prayer to my closest human relationships because prayer is primarily a relational exercise. The most accurate measure of the state of my relationship with God is my prayer life.

Like with my relationships, I need discipline and desire to experience closeness to God.

We are commanded in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to "pray continually." I require discipline to pray, and then to be regular at it. If I only pray when I feel like it, it may not happen regularly. Over the years, I have learnt that I must do what is right, regardless of how I feel. I especially learnt that raising young children. If I only ever got up to crying babies when I felt like it, I would have been a grossly negligent father.

So, I pray, even when I don't necessarily feel like it. I have also learnt that I can act my way into feelings. I might start praying just because it is the right thing to do, but then while praying, I find myself delighting to be with my heavenly Father.

That brings me to the second requirement. Desire. Prayer is the primary mode by which we spend time with God. So, I pray that God the Holy Spirit will give me a longing to seek fellowship with the Lord in prayer. May my prayer be that of David's in Psalm 16:11:

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

I pray that you will resolve, with the Lord's help, to pray and pray regularly in 2025. May the Lord give you the discipline to pray even when you don't feel like it. And his love for you in Christ so melt your heart, that you will desire to be with your heavenly Father in prayer.

God Bless,
Mark Adams