

# The Good Recipe

I like cooking. I think of my work in the kitchen as being exciting and creative; I know that I easily become bossy while I cook. Cooking for me is like art; even with the same ingredients, each person creates something unique. In Korea, people believe that the taste of food is dependent on the hands of the people who cook. That's what I believe too. If you ask me what I miss most about Korea, I would say that it's the food, the real Korean food that we can't get here in Canada. So, I have had to learn how to cook the food that I have missed so much. My mother makes the best Korean hot spicy beef soup. One day, while I was cooking the same soup, I realized that I could make food like my mother made for me. Of course, I couldn't catch up to her cooking skill, but it was close enough to soothe my homesickness. I don't need a recipe for my mother's signature dishes; I just can follow my instincts, because I know the taste and I know the right ingredients. But I do need a recipe for the food that I am not used to, even for a light meal like pancakes or waffles. Everyone who cooks has experienced this: we need a recipe right up until the point when we realize we've memorized it, and we know each measurement, each ingredient, by heart. Even excellent cooks start with recipes, so it's logical for ordinary people to consult recipes to practice and to enjoy cooking.

Likewise, we need a recipe for a Christ-like life. In today's passage, Paul gives us a good recipe to follow Christ. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." A Korean translation says "For this is God's will that God has shown us through Jesus Christ." That's how Jesus lived, and it seems a simple recipe: three ingredients, mix together, repeat every day for the rest of your life. But, as many cooks know, the simplest recipes are often deceptively difficult. None of us are born Christians; we learn to become one. Indeed, it is a life-long journey to follow Christ. None of us rejoice always. None of us pray without ceasing. And only the rarest of saints can give thanks in all circumstances. But if we follow the recipe, if we practice, it

brings us close to God. We just need simple instructions. It's the practice that makes the difference. I'd like to suggest that you put Paul's words where you can see them often and easily at home, like on the door of your refrigerator, on your mirror or on your computer desk, so that the words keep encouraging you, and reminding you of a life of joy, a life of prayer and a life of thanksgiving.

You might still wonder how it is possible to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances. Imagine a tree. Some trees are green in all seasons, but most trees have different shapes in each season. They're bare-branched in winter, and begin to bud when spring arrives. I am not a forester; I just love trees and love watching them. It seems to me that the most important thing for the life of a tree is its roots: whether it puts down roots deep enough to get nourishment from the soil, and to anchor it firmly against storms. Trees can endure wind, snow and cold when they have strong, healthy roots. I think we are like trees, rooted in God. We all experience the four seasons of life: spring, summer, fall and winter, sometimes over years, sometimes all in one day. Our lives may look different at each stage, but the roots, pushing deep into the good soil of our Christian faith, remain, intact and growing through every season. The question is how deep and healthy your roots are. Jesus was completely dependent on God with his deep and healthy roots, and because of that he could give us life. Jesus says in John 12:23, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Jesus became a life-giver for us all through his deep relationship with God. As we practice rejoicing always, praying without ceasing, giving thanks in all circumstances, we are, like Jesus, becoming more dependent on God.

I'd like to introduce a couple of recipes to become more dependent on God. There is a beautiful, simple but powerful prayer in the Orthodox Church tradition. This prayer is called, "The Jesus Prayer". We repeat a sentence, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy of me, a sinner." We continue the sentence as many times as possible either speaking aloud or silently. It can be even shorter, "Jesus, have mercy on me" or just say "Jesus" as you breathe in and out. I sometimes practice this prayer, and I find it very helpful, especially when I really need to pray

but don't know how or what to say. You can practice this prayer anywhere, when you walk, when you wash dishes, even when you're waiting in line. This prayer, I believe, draws us into the presence of God every day.

Another new recipe is healing touch. I experienced healing touch before I even knew what a healing touch ministry was. It was just an ordinary evening in a small apartment in Burnaby in 2007. My family and I happened to stand in a circle, and suddenly I felt love and energy, flowing through my heart and body to my family. And my family felt the same thing from me. With our healing and loving energy, my little boy became so calm and peaceful. We did not touch, but we all felt love and energy in a way that we can't describe. After the experience, I became very interested in healing touch. So I took a healing pathway workshop in a local church, and have practiced healing touch since then. When I give healing touch, it becomes clear that I am not a giver but just a receiver. God is the source of healing and love, and we can become a channel of that healing; we just need to open up and give ourselves for God's use. We become more dependent on God, as we continue the healing ministry of Christ. Paul's prayer in today's passage is our prayer too; "May the God of peace sanctify you entirely and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

People who love to cook know the worry and excitement of trying a new recipe – will it work? Will I know how to use the new ingredients? What if the instructions are unclear? There can be some anxiety testing new dishes, and sometimes some disappointment, but those are overshadowed by the possibility of creating something new and surprising, finding a new recipe that you want to share with your family and friends, listing off the ingredients as you tell them about your discovery, the amazing new skill you developed, the nourishment that you've added to your life. Every cook knows the value of a good recipe, just as every Christian knows the value of exploring different spiritual gifts.