

## **14 We need to solve our own problems instead of relying on prayer to an absent God?**

*We need to solve our own problems instead of relying on prayer to an absent God?* When people say this to us they show that God is, in their eyes, a sort of imaginary problem solver who helps people live in denial.

There's no question that Christian believers have given wrong impressions again and again, as if God were a panacea or universal remedy.

To see God as such an 'add on' to life is a perception that needs challenging. To see God as absent is another wrong perception Christians must question.

*We need to solve our own problems instead of relying on prayer to an absent God.* What if our problems have a higher significance? So that even when problems seem to get on top of us there's a deeper truth operating?

If the heart of human problems is the human heart no amount of superficial problem solving will ultimately change things. If you've got a deep cancer you need surgery and not an aspirin!

You could say Jesus had a problem when they nailed him to the Cross. Could he have solved that problem other than as Peter says *entrusting himself to the one who judges justly* (1 Peter 2:23b) in the hope of the resurrection?

When it comes to facing death we're up against an insurmountable problem. How can we solve it ourselves? It's the Christian good news that God came to earth to put this problem – death – in true perspective by raising Jesus.

Christianity isn't a problem solver in the sense of unknotting the knots of life. It's a way of living through problems in the light of God who's the ultimate solution!

What matters supremely is discernment. We need to know whether to submit to a problem, work around it or tackle it head on. Such discernment can come from faith in a God who's no more absent from us than the air we breathe!

The saying 'God helps those who help themselves' has a lot of truth to it. He also helps those who can't help themselves - but that's another story.

A saint was asked why some people seemed holier than others. He answered it was just down to determination. They were intent on seeking God in the bible and the sacraments, in prayer and Christian fellowship. This active seeking helped them receive more from God than if they'd just sat back and expected God to bless their spiritual lives without their efforts.

President John Kennedy said at his inauguration that '*man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty*' adding that '*here on earth God's work must truly be our own*'. He also quoted Isaiah's challenge to "*undo the heavy burdens ... and to let the oppressed go free.*"

God encourages us to work, to help each other, to be active in our communities, to heal the sick, cloth the poor and feed the hungry. The bible calls for vigorous action in partnership with God. We do all we can (in his power) and he does all he can - and together we work at things.

As Christians believe in a higher power we are often more ambitious, more hardworking and thus able to achieve more than those who without God believe they have to change the world on their own.

*We need to solve our own problems instead of relying on prayer to an absent God?* The world is full of problems but to help solve them, to help other people, we need to forget ourselves and our own desires.

It's a shade easy to say we must help ourselves. The real problem is getting people to do so. This is where the vision of God comes in.

T.S.Eliot lamented the politics of his day where people were '*dreaming of systems so perfect that no one would need to be good*'.

There's no world transformation without contemplation. Prayerful centring on the Source and Centre of all things breeds unselfishness and moral motivation. Such encounter with the Lord bears fruit in the passion to see the *kingdom of this world becoming the kingdom of our God and of his Christ* (Revelation 1:15).

Problems lose their power when spread before the Lord in the viewpoint of eternity. He's neither absent nor indifferent to our problems.

As President Kennedy put it '*here on earth God's work must truly be our own*'

*John Twisleton 13.8.08*