



FALL SERIES DISCUSSION & STUDY GUIDE PART FOUR: DEEPENING PRAYER

In follow up to Pastor Marc's *PART THREE: LEARNING PRAYER* message last weekend and subsequent reading of the Chapters 6-9 (pg. 81-142) this past week, we now launch into *PART FOUR: DEEPENING PRAYER* in our *PRAYER* series with a message from Pastor Steve. For this week's study, please read pages 143-186 including chapters 10-11 in the book, *PRAYER*, by Timothy Keller. Utilize the following study and discussion/reflection questions on each chapter individually, with your family, or small group.

Chapter 10 | As Conversation: Meditating On His Word (pg. 143-164)

Main Point for the Chapter:

"If prayer is to be a true conversation with God, it must be regularly preceded by listening to God's voice through meditation on the Scripture" (Keller, Prayer, pg.145).

Key Scriptures:

Psalms 1:1-6 (ESV)

The Way of the Righteous and the Wicked

1 Blessed is the man

who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

3 He is like a tree

planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does, he prospers.

- 4 The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
6 for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

John 7:37-38

37 On the last day of the feast, the greatest day, Jesus stood up and shouted out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me, and 38 let the one who believes in me drink. Just as the scripture says, 'From within him will flow rivers of living water.'"

Study & Reflection Questions:

1. In Keller's book, *Prayer*, chapter 10 notes that the Psalms are the prayer book of the Bible. Interestingly, the first Psalm is not actually a prayer but rather a meditation. Keller suggests that this is no accident, because before we talk to God in prayer we must first listen to God by meditation on Scripture (His Word). So, Psalm 1 could be regarded as the gateway to prayer through meditation on God's Word.

In Psalm 1 where do we observe that this passage is primarily speaking to meditation on Scripture as opposed to prayer?

2. Keller points us to three things that Psalm 1 promises the reader regarding meditation. The first is that meditation on God's Word will provide stability.

In what verses does this passage speak to stability and strength? (See Keller, pg. 146)

According to verses 1 and 2, what does dedicated meditation on Scripture guard against?

3. The second promise of Psalm 1 is that meditation on God's Word will develop substance of character. Psalm 1 compares a tree to chaff.

Read vv. 3—4. In this passage who is the tree and who is the chaff? What are some differences between a fruit bearing tree and chaff? (See Keller, pg. 147)

4. The third promise of Psalm 1 is that meditation will bring blessedness.

Where throughout the passage do you observe indications of this promise? (See Keller, pg. 148)

According to your observations in this Psalm in what ways does blessedness manifest itself and how is it contrasted?

Take a moment to reflect over the three areas of stability, substance of character, and blessedness and how these areas of your faith life have been impacted through “dry spells” of not meditating on Scripture.

Conversely think of times when this fruit of faith has been a natural expression of your life through time spent in God’s Word.

5. Often the Psalms give us glimpses into what the promised Messiah of Old Testament scripture would do and bring when that time would come and be fulfilled.

In this context, read John 7:37-38 above. Take some time to reflect and meditate on how Jesus’ words give greater gospel-centered clarity over the promises of Psalm 1.

Chapter 11 | As Encounter: Seeking His Face (pg. 165-186)

Main Point for the Chapter:

“It is possible for Christians to live their lives with a high degree of phoniness, hollowness, and inauthenticity. The reason is because they have failed to move that truth into their hearts and therefore it has not actually changed who they are and how they live.” (Keller, Prayer, pg. 167)

“The root problem... is that you are rich in Christ but nevertheless living poor.” (Keller, Prayer, pg. 169)

Key Scripture:

Ephesians 3:14—21 (ESV)

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Study and Reflection Questions:

6. In Keller's book, *Prayer*, chapter 11 focuses on the Apostle Paul's prayer for the Church in Ephesus found in Ephesians 3:14—21. Remember that this letter is being addressed to professed believers in Jesus Christ. The original intended readers are the faithful Christian believers belonging to the church of Ephesus (See Eph. 1:1, 15).

According to Paul's prayer what is an essential ingredient for believers to ultimately "be filled with all the fullness of God (v.19)"? (Hint: read verse 16)

What are ways the Holy Spirit works in our inner being so that we may more fully know Christ and his love? (Hint: think of the spiritual disciplines touched upon over the past several weeks, as well as, first and foremost our biblical understanding of the Means of Grace that the Lord extends through His Word in baptism and the Lord's Supper.)

7. The Apostle Paul is praying that the faithful believers in Ephesus would develop a deeper understanding of Jesus Christ and his love. Certainly knowledge of the faith (what we believe and confess) is absolutely important, but he suggests there is more than simply knowing information about Jesus. (See also Keller pg.166)

What does this tell us about the relationship between knowing information about Jesus versus knowing/experiencing Jesus through a depth of growing faith (vv.17-19)?

From verses 18 and 19 what are some observations we can make about Christ's love?

8. Verse 19 uses the words "know" and "knowledge" which can be confusing, but the first "know" can also be defined more specifically as an experiential, heart, type of knowing while the second "knowledge" can be more specifically defined as an intellectual, science, type of knowing.

With this perspective on the use of "know" and "knowledge" how does this affect your interpretation of what is necessary to be - "filled with all the fullness of God (v.19)?" Given what we have learned through this study, what does this prayer (Eph. 3:14—21) inform us

**about God's redemption, restoration, and renewal of His children?
(i.e. what is God's method for transforming us day by day?)**

Take a moment right now and pray, just as Paul did, for the Holy Spirit to sensitize your heart (your inner being) to more fully comprehend the love of Christ and the truth of the Gospel.

Finally take some time to pray the same for our entire church and school community.



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