



## FALL SERIES DISCUSSION & STUDY GUIDE

### PART FIVE: DOING PRAYER

In follow up to Pastor Steve's *PART FOUR: DEEPENING PRAYER* message last weekend and subsequent reading of the Chapters 10-11 (pg. 143-186) this past week, we now in conclusion launch into *PART FIVE: DOING PRAYER* of our *PRAYER* series with a message from Pastor Marc. For this week's study, please read pages 187-262 including chapters 12-15 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 12 | Awe: Praising His Glory (pg. 187-204)

##### Main Point for the Chapter:

What can re-engineer our very inner being, the structure of our personality? What can create healthy human community? Worship and adoration of God. We must love God supremely, and that can be cultivated only through praise and adoration. (Keller, *Prayer*, pg. 195)

##### Key Scripture:

Psalms 150 (ESV)

- 1 Praise the Lord!  
Praise God in his sanctuary;  
praise him in his mighty heavens!
- 2 Praise him for his mighty deeds;  
praise him according to his excellent greatness!
- 3 Praise him with trumpet sound;  
praise him with lute and harp!
- 4 Praise him with tambourine and dance;  
praise him with strings and pipe!
- 5 Praise him with sounding cymbals;  
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!

6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

## Study & Reflection Questions:

In Keller's book, *Prayer*, chapter 12 focuses on the first of three primary categories of prayer. The three types are, "upward" prayer, "inward" prayer, and "outward" prayer. Each of the next three chapters will cover one of the three. Chapter 12 focuses on "upward" prayer; also referred to as praise, adoration, and thanksgiving.

1. In this chapter Keller presents the idea that we give our love to the things that we think will make us the most joyful. What we praise and adore most will point us to what it is we love most (see Keller, pg.193). God knows that nothing this world has to offer will handle the weight of our expectations. He knows that He is the only one who can truly restore and renew us. This is why He desires for us to praise and worship Him before all else, because He is the only path to true and everlasting joy. Let's look at what Psalm 150 teaches us about praise.

**In verse 1 (read v.1) who does the psalmist say we should praise? Where is it that He should be praised? What do you think the reason is for pointing out the "where" of praise?**

2. Verse 2 answers the question of why He deserves our praise (read v.2).

**In what ways has God demonstrated His power and greatness to humankind, and to the universe?**

**Can you make this personal to you? In other words, what mighty deeds has He done in your life? For what things are you compelled to personally thank and praise God?**

3. Verses 3 through 6 tell us how we should praise God (read vv. 3-6).

**What do you think the primary message of these verses is? In the context of these verses, what does praise look like? How does your praise life compare to this "party" scene?**

4. Keller suggests that prayers filled with praise directly develop love for God (Keller, pg.193).

**Does your prayer time include the kind of praise we find in Psalm 150? Do you exclaim your joyful thankfulness to Him? Cry out in celebration of Him? Will you ask God to open your heart to this Psalm and see where it leads in your prayer life?**

## Chapter 13 | Intimacy: Finding His Grace (pg. 205-221)

### Main Point for the Chapter:

Jesus Christ paid for our sin. Sin's condemnation can no longer fall on we who have repented and believed in him (Rom 8:1). If we forget this, we turn confession into a grueling, self-punishing penitence rather than gospel repentance. (Keller, Prayer, pg. 208)

### Key Scripture:

Psalms 32 (ESV)

- 1 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.
- 2 Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,  
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
- 3 For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.
- 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah
- 5 I acknowledged my sin to you,  
and I did not cover my iniquity;  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"  
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah
- 6 Therefore let everyone who is godly  
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;  
surely in the rush of great waters,  
they shall not reach him.
- 7 You are a hiding place for me;  
you preserve me from trouble;  
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah
- 8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;  
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
- 9 Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,  
which must be curbed with bit and bridle,  
or it will not stay near you.
- 10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked,  
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.
- 11 Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous,  
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

### Study & Reflection Questions:

In Keller's book, Prayer, chapter 13 focuses on the second of three primary categories of prayer. The three types are, "upward" prayer, "inward" prayer, and "outward" prayer. This chapter focuses on "inward" prayer; also referred to as confession, asking forgiveness, and repentance.

5. Psalm 32 speaks directly to the power of confessional prayer and receiving forgiveness from God. The first two verses of the passage introduce the main topic of the Psalm by declaring a blessing.

**In verses 1 and 2, upon whom is God's blessing? What do you think, "in whose spirit there is no deceit" means (v.2)?**

6. In verse 1 and 2 we learn that God's blessing is upon the person who is forgiven of sin. We also see the first hint of the need for confession (v.2). In the next two verses (read vv. 3, 4) we see what happens to those who try to hide their sin from God.

**What does life look like for the person who refuses to confess their mistakes and shortcomings to God in prayer?**

**In contrast what happens when we openly confess our sin to God (v. 5)?**

7. Now in verse 6 we are exhorted to "pray" and openly confess our sins to God.

**This brings three blessings upon the person in prayer. What are they? Hint: 1—see verse 7; 2—see verse 8; 3—see verse 10.**

8. The psalm ends with telling us the response that all sinners should have after confessing their sin before God and freely receiving His just forgiveness.

**Do you finish your confession to God with gladness, rejoicing, and joy?**

**According to this Psalm, why should we "shout for joy" after our prayers of confession?**

**Considering the words of 1 John 1:9 often spoken in our Traditional Praise services preceding times of prayerful confession, from where does that resulting "uprightness" of Psalm 32 come?**

## **Chapter 14 | Struggle: Asking His Help (pg. 222-239)**

**Main Point for the Chapter:**

Prayer is not merely a way to get inward peace—it is also a way to look outward and participate with God in His work in the world. (Keller, Prayer, pg. 223)

### **Key Scripture:**

Psalm 13 (ESV)

- 1 How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?
- 2 How long must I take counsel in my soul  
and have sorrow in my heart all the day?  
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?
- 3 Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;  
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,
- 4 lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him,"  
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.
- 5 But I have trusted in your steadfast love;  
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
- 6 I will sing to the Lord,  
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

### **Study and Reflection Questions:**

In Keller's book, *Prayer*, chapter 14 focuses on the third of three primary categories of prayer. The three types are, "upward" prayer, "inward" prayer, and "outward" prayer. This chapter focuses on "outward" prayer; also referred to as petition, supplication, or "asking God for help."

9. Read Psalm 13. The psalmist is expressing distress because he feels that God has not heard his petitions for help against enemies.

**Have you ever felt like this - that God is not listening to your pleas for assistance and help with your enemies?**

**Knowing there are many kinds of "enemies" we face in this world, name some types of "enemies" that one might ask, or petition, God to help them overcome.**

10. Keller, in this chapter, makes a point that prayers of supplication need to be a struggle; they need to be "strenuous petitions." As Keller writes, "Prayer has been called, 'rebellion against the world's evil status quo.' " (Keller, pg.223). Ephesians 6:18 lists prayer as a weapon in our spiritual warfare against the forces of evil.

**What do you observe in Psalm 13 that gives indication of this being a strenuous, bold, and impassioned prayer to God? (Hint: focus on the first 4 verses)**

11. In this chapter, Keller also affirms that we should pour out our hearts' desires to God. However, it always needs to be viewed in the context of what is agreeable to God's will. In other words, we should be asking God for things that fulfill both our desires and His will and wisdom (c.f. James 4:2-3). If what we are requesting seems contrary to God's character and teaching, then we need to seriously reflect upon the motivations of our heart (Keller, pg. 226).

**How does this change the way you will talk to God about the things you would like to see happen in your life and in the lives of those you are praying for?**

12. If we step back and view this Psalm in the context of the history of Jewish faith and New Testament Christianity, we observe a prayer that precedes the birth of Jesus Christ by about 1000 years.

**Discuss or reflect how this Psalm of prayer is an ultimate example of God answering prayer in a way or manner that the Jewish people did not expect. Note that this Psalm is foreshadowing the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.**

**Discuss and reflect upon how God answers the Psalmist's petition for deliverance from enemies in a much grander way than the Psalmist could ever imagine.**

**In what ways does this example personally impact your perspective on prayer?**

## **Chapter 15 | Practice: Daily Prayer (pg. 240-262)**

### **Main Point for the Chapter:**

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. (Colossians 4:2 ESV)

"Paul said we should 'pray without ceasing' (1 Thess. 5:17), meaning that we should, if possible, do everything all day with conscious reference to God (1 Cor. 10:31). There should be background music of thankfulness and joy behind every incident in our day, audible only to us (Col. 3:16-17). This kind of spontaneous and constant prayer during the day should be a habit of the heart. We will never develop it, however, unless we take up the discipline of regular, daily prayer." (Keller, Prayer, pg. 240)

### **Key Scripture Verses:**

Colossians 4:2 (ESV)

2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

Philippians 4:5-7 (ESV)

5b The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (ESV)

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

## Study and Reflection Questions:

In Keller's book, *Prayer*, chapter 15 focuses on applying prayer in our lives regularly. Keller stresses the importance of prayer as a daily practice. He challenges us to be disciplined and diligent in our prayer time.

13. Read Colossians 4:2. Paul is ending his letter to the church of Colossae with some final instructions on Christian living.

**In this verse, to what spiritual discipline is Paul exhorting the believers in Colossae to adhere?**

**What are the three primary adverbs that Paul uses to characterize Christian prayer?**

14. To be steadfast in prayer means to be strong and devoted. On one hand pray boldly with the expectation that God will answer. On the other hand, pray persistently when you don't hear God's answer clearly.

**Practically speaking, how would you describe what steadfast prayer looks like in one's life?**

15. To be watchful in prayer means to be aware and alert. Aware of God working in all things. Alert to the trappings of the world around you.

**How does prayer help us with both awareness of God and alertness to sin?**

16. To be thankful in prayer includes experiencing both delight and humility. We are to be delighted in all circumstances, because God is always at work. We are humbled in the realization that God is including us in His plan to renew and redeem all of creation.

**Think about the least favorite part of your past week. Can you see a way to be thankful to God for it? Discuss and reflect on your thoughts on this.**

17. The Apostle Paul ends many of his letters (epistles) with an exhortation to remain in prayer. In addition to Colossians 4:2, read above: Philippians 4:5-7 and 1Thessalonians 5:16-18.

**What characteristics of prayer do you observe are shared in these verses?**

18. Just as Paul encourages his readers to abide in prayer at the end of his letters, it seems fitting that we end this series with a similar exhortation. Consider again the words of our St. John Strategic Direction of Constant Prayer:

### **CONSTANT PRAYER**

Imagine a faith community where everyone unceasingly approaches the Lord in prayer individually, as families, and as a church and school community. A community where people don't just say they'll pray, but actually do pray openly in complete faith and trust, confidently recognizing the incredible privilege and intimate opportunity we have to call upon the powerful presence of our Triune God in Jesus' name.

### **STRATEGIC DIRECTION:**

In Jesus, our Church and School family is ONE and reaching MANY as we grow more and more individually and corporately to rely on the Lord for all things, seeking Him passionately in prayer that His will would be done and accomplished among us.

**What are some realistic ways you can keep growing in your prayer life with God?**

**How will you continue in prayer differently than before we embarked on this study?**

**Spend some time praying that the Lord would continue to lead you and our entire St. John family to more and more be people of prayer.**





Have a prayer request you'd like added and shared to our weekly St. John family prayer list?  
Simply email your request to:

**[prayer@stjohnrochester.org](mailto:prayer@stjohnrochester.org)**

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