

REFLECTIONS ON PRAYER

Reflections on Tim Keller's 'Prayer' and God's word

KICKING OFF

I was raised by two very different parents, my mother – always practical and efficient, and my father – creative and sentimental. And as their offspring we tend to lean either one way or the other, some of us more emotional beings (warmer yet sometimes impractical) while others more practical (efficient yet sometimes cold).

Just for fun...											
Circle on the scale below where you place yourself on a scale between practical and emotional?											
Practical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Emotional

The church can also be accused of either leaning too far one way or the other, to be overly practical and rigid especially in areas of doctrine and practice or overly experiential especially in areas of emotional mysticism and the more fantastical gifts of the Spirit. For example during the rise of the Pentecostal movement in Australia the Reformed Church became overly suspicious of experiential faith while the Pentecostal movement became suspicious of strong Biblical doctrine as rigid and controlling. The truth is always somewhere in the middle and the Bible is always the best place to look to find a healthy balance and God's own view of things.

And Tim Keller begins by questioning two extremes in how people often think about prayer – ***communion-centred (experiential adoration) and kingdom-centred (practical supplication)***.

Between these two extremes, how would you describe how you normally pray?

Do you see your prayer life influenced at all by whether you identified yourself as more practical or emotional on the scale above?

What *does* influence how you pray? (crisis, when I remember or have time, routine/prayer list, reflection on Bible reading etc)

Be honest: What do you see as lacking in your current prayer life with God?

And so to begin, Tim Keller finds that both the Psalms (the Old Testament prayer book) and the New Testament support both forms of prayer, both experiential encounter and practical conversation with God. Tim also finds support for this in the very opening statement of the Westminster Shorter Catechism – Q. What is the chief end of man? A. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

GOING DEEPER

Let's now open our Bibles to see this balance in the Scriptures for ourselves...

Read Hebrews 4:14-16 (and 7:23-27)

1. *To begin, how is it that we can approach God's throne of grace with confidence?*
2. *How can we be absolutely sure we will receive mercy and grace in our time of need?*

Now read Psalm 63 verses 1-8 (A prayer of intimate communion with God)

The heading of this Psalm of David tells us that these were his words while in the desert of Judah. This was most probably around the time David was forced to flee Jerusalem when his own son Absalom engineered a conspiracy against him. Even as he left the city people yelled abuse and curses on David, even throwing stones and dirt at him until he reached his destination exhausted.

3. *What words does David use to describe his **complete adoration** for God?*
4. *What do you find refreshing about David's prayer?*
5. *In verse 11, what is David's future hope for all people? What does this mean?*

And finally read Psalm 10:12-14 (Kingdom centred prayer)

6. *What are David's practical concerns in this prayer?*
7. *If you were to voice your concerns for the world and the Church today in similar language what would you pray to God?*

TAKING IT HOME

Even from this very beginning as we investigate prayer, how might your prayer life be deepened by our investigation of the above examples of intimate adoration and kingdom centred conversation?

PRAY

Pray together, talking to God about what we have thought through as well as our praises and concerns.