

# REFLECTIONS ON PRAYER 7

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

## KICKING OFF

So far we have seen that prayer is...

(week 1) both an expression of intimate adoration and Kingdom centred concerns

(week 2) an intelligent mysticism that involves both the affections of the heart but also the convictions of the mind; truth as well as experience

(week 3) praying to know God better through our circumstances rather than for a change of circumstances

(week 4) our response to God first revealing himself to us most fully in Christ and contemplating his glorious riches

(week 5), immersed in God's word through whom God has communicated himself to us, the reality of the human condition, and the concerns of his heart

(week 6) Trinitarian, all possible only through the saving love of the Father, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and perfect mediation of the son

How have you found these concepts impact on your own prayer life over the last 6 weeks?

## GOING DEEPER

In our final study we will discuss our attitude to God in prayer as well as some practical tips going forward.

In Part three, chapter 6, Keller mentions a letter written by Augustine (354-430), the greatest theologian of the first millennium, to a Roman noblewoman.

Augustine's first point was that before you pray you, ***"must account yourself desolate in this world, however great the prosperity of your lot may be."*** We must see that our heart's loves are "disordered," out of order. That we love prosperity, success, status, love, and pleasure more than God's presence. And that no matter how great our earthly circumstances become, they can never bring you the lasting peace, happiness, and consolation that are found in Christ. And that unless we recognize this heart disorder and realize how much it distorts our lives, our prayers will be part of the problem, not an agent of our healing. ***"If you have settled this—if you have grasped the character of your heart and admitted your desolation apart from Christ—then, he says, you can begin to pray."***

What do you think Augustine meant by saying that our prayers will only be part of the problem, not an agent of our healing if we don't yet consider the disordered state of our hearts?

As a minister it has been interesting working and serving in some very different locations with various hearts issues. In Castle Hill in Sydney for example, where the average income of 36% of households was “\$2,500 or more per week in 2011,” my message was love God not money and share Christ with the lost. On the Sunshine Coast, love God not lifestyle and share Christ with the lost.

What would you say our God is in Clayfield? How are our own hearts disordered here that prevents us loving God and taking the great commission seriously?

How do you feel considering our own disordered hearts might be helpful before we pray?

**Read Psalm 27:4, proverbs 30:7-9 and Philipians 3:8-11**

How do these verses help us reorder our hearts?

What do we need to repent of as we humbly approach God in prayer?

Two simple tips as we end this series on prayer...

One key aspect of prayer is to meditate on Scripture and then pray what we have learnt back to God. As we think about a particular chapter or verse asking what does this teach me about God, about Jesus and how it is fulfilled in Jesus, and what does it teach me about myself and my own heart condition? What do I need to praise God for, thank God for, repent of and ask God for?

The Scottish minister Murray McCheyne devised an excellent breakdown of the Bible for our daily reading that has proved incredibly helpful to many in reading through the Bible in a year (or two). This reading plan is attached, can be found in Don Carson’s **‘For the Love of God’** and encourages us to read either four or two chapters a day and pray these back to God.

Another tip in reading the Psalms, the central prayer book of the bible, is to use the Hebrew Parallelism to help us meditate. Parallelism is the Hebrew art of saying the same thing twice. But what people have recently discovered (since around 1985!) is that the second line often adds something to the first – line 2 = line 1 plus more. This enables us to ask what comes next? What would we expect to see?

So in Psalm 51 verse 15, 15 **“Open my lips, Lord.”** Think – what would we expect to hear next? Open my lips Lord to feed me? **“and my mouth will declare your praise.”**

It is almost as if the whole book of Psalms is design for us to think and meditate and pray in this way.

## TAKING IT HOME

Pray that we would pray, examining our hearts, reflecting and meditating on Scripture, and walking with God.