

# Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God by Timothy Keller

Kindle highlights by Len Geddert

## Desiring Prayer

Prayer leads to a self-knowledge that is impossible to achieve any other way P12

Paul most frequently asked for his friends to know God better, the eyes of their hearts....enlightened. P20-21

- This fuller knowledge of God a more critical thing than a change in circumstances
- He sees prayer as a way to get more of God himself

The infallible test of spiritual integrity, Jesus says, is your private prayer life. P23

At the heart of all the various ways of knowing God is both public and private prayer. P23

Pray in a disciplined way, until.....we get through duty to delight. P25

To fail to pray.....is a sin against God's glory. P26

- Prayer is simply a recognition of the greatness of God.

In Acts, prayer is one of the main signs that the Spirit has come into the heart through faith in Christ. P27

Prayer is so great that wherever you look in the Bible, it is there P28

- Everywhere God is, prayer is.

Prayer is awe, intimacy, struggle – yet the way to reality. There is nothing more important, or harder, or richer or more life-altering. There is absolutely nothing so great as prayer. P32

## Understanding Prayer

Prayer is ultimately a verbal response of faith to a transcendent God's Word and his grace.... P43

- Prayer can also lead regularly to a personal encounter with God, which can be indeed a wondrous, mysterious, awe-filled experience.

Prayer is responding to God..... God comes to us first or we would never reach out to him. P46

The more clearly Job saw who God was, the fuller his prayers became.... P48

- The more true his knowledge of God, the more fruitful his prayers became, and the more sweeping the change in his life.

The power of our prayers lies in our knowledge of God. P49

Christian prayer is fellowship with the personal God who befriends us through speech. P52

If God's words are his personal, active presence, then to put your trust in God's words is to put your trust in God P54

We speak only to the degree we are spoken to. P55

- We should listen, study, think, reflect, and ponder the Scriptures until there is an answering response in our hearts and minds.

If the goal of prayer is a real, personal connection with God, then it is only by immersion in the language of the Bible that we will learn to pray, perhaps just as slowly as a child learns to speak. P55

...the full range of prayer...can only be produced if we are responding in prayer according to who God is as revealed in the Scripture. P60

- In every case the nature of the prayer is determined by the character of God....
- We must not decide how to pray based on what types of prayer are the most effective for producing the experiences and feelings we want. We pray in response to God himself.

...if God is not the starting point, then our own perceived emotional needs become the drivers and sole focus of our prayer. That will inevitably narrow prayer down from its full biblical spectrum. P61

We should do everything possible to behold our God as he is, and prayer will follow. The more clearly we grasp who God is, the more our prayer is shaped and determined accordingly. P62

Without prayer that answers the God of the Bible, we will only be talking to ourselves. P62

...we cannot be sure he is speaking to us unless we read it in the Scripture. P62

The Word of God created within David the desire, drive, and strength to pray. The principle: God speaks to us in his Word, and we respond in prayer, entering into the divine conversation, into communion with God. P64

...the only reason God would have had for creating us was not to get the cosmic love and joy of relationship (because he already had that) but to share it. P68

- ...God – who is “other-oriented” in his very core, who seeks glory only to give it to others...
- ...he wants to share the joy he has. Prayer is our way of entering into the happiness of God himself.

God was called Father only occasionally in the Old Testament P68

To be adopted means that now God loves us as if we had done all Jesus had done P69

- We have the most intimate and unbreakable relationship possible with the God of the universe.

To be a child of God means access. P70

- Prayer is the way to sense and appropriate this access and fatherly love....

You know that God responds to your cry with the intense love and care of a parent responding to the cry of pain of his or her child. P71

The ground motive of Spirit-directed, Christ-mediated prayer – to simply know him better and enjoy his presence

- Seldom or never do we spend sustained time adoring and praising God. P77

You don't have true saving knowledge of God until you long to know and serve him. P79

The only time in all the gospels that Jesus Christ prays to God and doesn't call him Father is on the cross, when he says, “My God, my God, why have you forgotten me? Why have you forsaken me? P79

- Jesus lost his relationship with the Father so that we could have a relationship with God as father.
- ....That is the cost of prayer. Jesus paid the price so God could be our father.

## Learning Prayer

Augustine...if you have grasped the character of your heart and admitted your desolation apart from Christ – then, he says, you can begin to pray. P85

- If we have made God our greatest love, and if knowing and pleasing him is our highest pleasure, it transforms both what and how we pray for a happy life. P86

Luther...If, as we are meditating or praying, “an abundance of good thoughts come to us, we ought to disregard the other petitions, make room for such thoughts, listen in silence, and under no circumstances obstruct them. The Holy Spirit himself preaches here, and one word of his sermon is better than a thousand of our prayers.” P95

- Luther is talking about the eyes of our hearts being enlightened so that things we know with the mind become more fully rooted in our beings’ core. P96

Calvin...There are many goods that God will not give us unless we honor him and make our hearts a safe place to receive them through prayer. But on the other hand – what thoughtful persons, knowing the limits of their own wisdom, would dare to pray if they thought God would invariably give them their wishes. P102

- God will not give us anything contrary to his will....We can, therefore pray confidently because he won’t give us everything we want.
- ...where you do not get an answer, or where the answer is not what you want, use prayer to enable you to rest in his will. P103

The Lord’s Prayer was given to us in plural form. We ask God to give *us* what *we* need. P118

- As much as we can, we should pray with others formally in gathered worship and informally.
- By praying with friends, you will be able to hear and see facets of Jesus that you have not yet perceived P119

Prayer should be done regularly, persistently, resolutely, tenaciously at least daily, whether we feel like it or not P121

- Must be persevering P122
- Tends to have a cumulative effect
- Is always hard work, and often an agony P123
- We often wrestle in prayer just to concentrate
- While God can and will grant times of peace and tranquility, no Christian outgrows the need to struggle and persevere in prayer.

Prayer in Jesus’ name and the power of the Spirit is the restoration of that single most precious thing we had with God in the beginning – free communication with him. P123

Packer’s own practice is “reading Scripture, thinking through what my reading shows me of God, and turning that vision into praise before I go further [into prayer].” P124

While it is not at all improper to address the Son or the Spirit, ordinarily prayer will be addressed to the Father with gratitude to the Son and dependence on the Spirit. P126

“As far as I can see, prayer has been ordained only for the helpless...Prayer and helplessness are inseparable. Only he who is helpless can truly pray.” P128

- To pray is to accept that we are, and always will be, wholly dependent on God for everything.

Jesus is calling believers to intimate communion with him – to prayer. P128

- ...no one even thinks about praying unless God is prompting or leading us to pray by his Holy Spirit. P129

Prayer is the way that all the things we believe in and that Christ has won for us actually become our strength. Prayer is the way that truth is worked into your heart to create new instinct, reflexes, and dispositions. P132

We must avoid extremes – of either not asking God for things or of thinking we can bend God’s will to ours. We must combine tenacious importunity, a “striving with God,” with deep acceptance of God’s wise will... P137

...a commitment to put God first and love and follow him supremely is necessary before God can grant our prayers without harming us. P138

Prayer – though it is often draining, even an agony – is in the long term the greatest source of power possible P140

## Deepening Prayer

...if prayer is to be a true conversation with God, it must be preceded by listening to God's voice through meditation on the Scriptures. P145

- ...the ordinary way for going deeper spiritually into prayer is through meditation on Scripture. P146

To meditate is to ask yourself questions about the truth, such as: "Am I living in the light of this? What difference does this make? Am I taking it seriously?.... P148

...meditation is taking the truth down into our hearts until it catches fire there and begins to melt and shape our reactions to God, ourselves, and the world. P151

...meditation means analyzing the truth with the mind; bringing it into the feelings, attitudes, and commitments of the heart; and then responding to the degree to which the Holy Spirit gives illumination and spiritual reality P162

Jesus was the great Mediator....meditated so profoundly on Scripture that he virtually "bled" Scripture, quoting it instinctively in the most extreme moments of his life. P163

- Do you want to be able to endure even the greatest pain? Put your roots into the Scriptures as he did.

Prayer is conversation that leads to encounter with God. P165

- to seek his face is to seek communion with him, a real interaction with God, sharing thoughts and love P176
- To behold the glory of Jesus means that we begin to find Christ beautiful for who he is in himself P177
- ...if the beauty and glory of Christ do not capture our imaginations, dominate our waking thought, and fill our hearts with longing and desire – then something else will.

If we believe with our minds that God is holy, we must also come to find his holiness enjoyable and satisfying just to praise it. P180

## Doing Prayer

Praise and adoration are the necessary preconditions for the proper formulation and motivation of all the other kinds of prayer. P190

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment P191

...to change people most profoundly, we must change what we worship. Thinking, arguments, and beliefs are crucial as means of moving the heart, but ultimately we are what we adore. We are what captures our imagination, what leads us to praise and to compel others to praise it. P194

Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him. P204

Prayer takes something you believe about God that is ignorable and detached from how you live your life and makes it vivid. P 204

...repentance is the way we make progress in the Christian life. It is the key to growing deeply and steadily into the character of Jesus. P208

It would be unjust of God – and unfaithful to his covenant with us – to receive two payments on the same debt, so it would be unjust for him not to forgive us. This profound assurance and security transforms repentance from being a means of atoning for sin into a means of honoring God and realigning our lives with him. P209

If you forget the costliness of your sin, your prayers of confession and repentance will be shallow and trivial. They will neither honor God nor change your life. P212

...real repentance should have these two components – admitting and rejecting. P213

...to weaken sin's hold on us...think of the intimacy we now have with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the justice of the Law, the costly sacrifice of Christ, the glory and transcendent majesty of God, and the patience of the Lord towards us. P216

This God-centered way of confessing and forsaking sin is a powerful instrument of change. P217

- ...that changes you from the inside out

Our prayer life is the place where we should examine our lives and find the sins that otherwise we would be too insensitive or busy to acknowledge. We should have regular times of self-examination, using guidelines that come from biblical descriptions of what a Christian should be. P217

It is quite natural in prayer to ask wrongly or not at all. We must learn to ask, and to ask rightly. P223

...it is part of God's goodness and appointment that he allows the world to be susceptible to our prayers. P224

- ...he maintains control of history and yet still makes human prayer and action responsible within history
- ...The teaching is that our prayers matter – “we have not because we ask not” – and yet God's wise plan is sovereign and infallible. These two facts are true at once, and how that is possible is a mystery to us.
- ...If both are true, we have the greatest incentive for diligent effort, and yet we can always sense God's everlasting arms under us. In the end, we can't frustrate God's good plans for us. P225

“we should lay before God, as part of our prayer, the reasons why we think that what we ask for is the best thing” ... “telling God why what we have asked for seems to us to be for the best, in light of what we know God's own goals to be” .... “that if he wills something different [than what we are asking] we know it will be better and it is that (rather than the best we could think of) that we really want him to do.” To try to say such words to God from our hearts, especially when we are asking for something we very desperately want, reshapes our hearts. P226/7

The Spirit, even when you do not know how to pray, takes your core prayer and prays as you should be praying before the throne. When you struggle in prayer, you can come before God with the confidence that he is going to give you what you would have asked for if you knew everything he knows. P229

...pray for individuals you meet during the day who are suffering or in difficulty P233

- Praying for faith for those around you who don't know Christ
- Prayers in general for both the church and the world

We are to offer and submit both our thoughts and our feelings in prayer to God. P235

- “...so complaint will be, or at least should be, a recurring element in the praying of the born again.”

We should be willing to pray with temerity and perseverance, waiting months or years for God to answer P236

- In some cases we realize that we needed to change before we were able to receive the request rightly or without harming ourselves. In other cases it becomes clear that the waiting brought us the thing we wanted and also developed in us a far more patient, calm, and strong temperament.

We know God will answer us when we call because one terrible day he did not answer Jesus when he called P237

- ....“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened” (Ps.66:18)

- ...Sinners deserve to have their prayers go unanswered. Jesus was the only human being in history who deserved to have all his prayers answered because of his perfect life. Yet he was turned down as if he cherished iniquity in his heart.
- ...Jesus' prayers were given the rejection that we sinners merit so that our prayers could have the reception that he merits. P238
- ...We know that God will answer us when we call "my God" because God did not answer Jesus when he made the same petition on the cross.

...systematic, consecutive reading of the Bible should precede or accompany prayer. P246

...daily prayer should include meditation, not just Bible study, P247

- ...if the affections of the heart are not engaged in prayer, real character change and growth in Christ-likeness is impossible.

...prayer should be started by "thinking over who it is that you will be addressing, what he has done to give you access to himself...how you stand related to him...[and] the truly breathtaking fact that through his Word and Spirit the Lord Jesus is building a friendship with you. P248

...take the Lord's Prayer and paraphrase each petition in [your] own words, filling it out with the concerns on [your] heart that day. ....this is perhaps the single best way to bridge from the Word into prayer..... P250

...balance our prayers among three forms – adoration and thanksgiving, confession and repentance, petition and intercession. P250

...petitionary prayer is only life changing and powerful if we do not rapidly run down a "grocery list" but instead lift each cause to God with theological reasoning and self-examination. P250

There is no situation or emotion a human being can experience that is not reflected somewhere in the Psalms. Immersing ourselves in the Psalms and turning them into prayers teaches our hearts the "grammar" of prayer and gives us the most formative instruction in how to pray in accord with God's character and will. P255

... "Deliver me from my enemies, O God," .... You can paraphrase this to talk about temptations you are facing or other spiritual traps that it would be easy to fall into. P256

If you pray, worship, and obey despite negative circumstances and feelings, you won't be drifting, and when the winds come up again, you will move ahead swiftly. P259

- In any case – pray no matter what. Praying is rowing, and sometimes it is like rowing in the dark – you won't feel that you are making any progress at all. Yet you are, and when the winds rise again, and they surely will, you will sail again before them. P260

Compiled/summarized by Len Geddert, December 2016

PS Another thing that personally motivates and encourages me in prayer is the fact that somehow all of our prayers are filling up bowls of incense which will be offered before God in eternity, not one wasted! (Revelation 5:8, 8:3-4)