

# St. John's Parish Church

## Community Group on Prayer

Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God  
by Tim Keller

### Understanding Prayer

Week 2 (2/16)

What is Prayer? (ch.3, pg. 33-49)

For this week's study please read chapter 3 in the book, "Prayer", by Timothy Keller. If you have any observations or questions regarding the reading please feel welcome to bring them to your Group.

#### Primary Bible Scripture for the week:

Romans 8:14-17 (ESV)

14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

#### Main point for the Study:

"What then is prayer, in the fullest sense? Prayer is continuing a conversation that God has started through his Word and his grace, which eventually becomes a full encounter with him." (Keller, Prayer, pg.48)

#### Questions for Reflection and Response:

1. Keller speaks of two different types, or levels, of prayer (Prayer, pg.44-45). One is instinctive, or general, and is a result of *divinitatis sensum*. John Calvin explains *divinitatis sensum* as the sense of deity that all human beings have (The Apostle Paul speaks to this in Romans 1:19-20).

·What is another type of prayer Keller mentions (Prayer, pg.45, 3rd paragraph)?

·Where do you see evidence of this in the Romans 8 passage above?

2. Romans 8:16 points to some essential differences between Christian prayer and other types of prayer.

·What are these differences (hints: 1-who are we, 2-who informs us who we are)?

·How does this bring comfort to you?

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3. Prayer is an avenue for creating and experiencing relationship with God. There are many different types of relationship we experience (e.g. friend, sibling, spouse, parent, boss, acquaintance, etc.), many different levels of intimacy.

Read verse 15.

“Abba” is a translation from an Aramaic word that interpreters liken to our contemporary term of “Daddy” or “Papa.” It is a tender, reverent, and intimate title. It is a term a young child would use to address his father. Paul purposefully chooses to use this word in the passage.

·What do you think this says about the way God sees us?

·What does this say about the way he asks us to approach Him?

4. Our relationship with God should not change depending upon how our life is going. Keller points to the book of Job as an example of the ability to love God no matter our circumstance.

·From the Romans passage above what do you observe about the attitude Paul says we should have when we pray?

·Do you find it more difficult or easier to pray during times of great emotional upheaval? Why do you think this is?

## **Primary Question for the Week:**

Romans 8:17 connects our relationship with God as adopted children to the person of Jesus Christ, God's one and only son. Paul reminds us that if we are adopted sons and daughters then we share in the same inheritance as Jesus Christ himself. This also serves to remind us that Jesus paid a price for us to receive the gift of adoption. He suffered and died on the cross for us to be able to know God as “Abba” (father/daddy). God speaks to us through the person of Christ and we know him through the Living Word (Bible).

The power of prayer depends on knowing God and there is no better way to know God but through His Son, Jesus Christ. To suffer with someone is to really know that person (compassion literally means ‘to suffer with’).

·In what ways are you suffering (sacrificing, enduring, and giving) in the name of Christ (see verse 17)?

·How are you answering (responding to) God through prayer?