

# St. John's Parish Church

## Community Group on Prayer

Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God

by Tim Keller

### Learning Prayer

Week 6 (3/16)

Rules for Prayer (ch.7, pg. 97-107)

For this week's study please read chapter 7 in the book, "Prayer", by Timothy Keller.

If you have any observations or questions in the reading

please feel welcome to bring them to your Group.

#### **Main Point for the Study:**

"Nothing we formulate or do can qualify us for access to God. Only grace can do that—based not on our performance but on the saving work of Christ." (Prayer, Keller, pg. 103)

#### **Primary Bible Scripture for the Week:**

##### **Psalm 130:3—4 (ESV)**

3 If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,

O Lord, who could stand?

4 But with you there is forgiveness,

that you may be feared.

##### **Jeremiah 29:12—14 (ESV)**

12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. 13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

##### **John 16:22—24 (ESV)**

22 So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. 23 In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. 24 Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

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## **Reflection and Response Questions:**

In chapter 7 of Prayer, Keller summarizes 5 rules on the practice of prayer as found in John Calvin's publication, Institutes of the Christian Religion. (see Keller, Prayer, pg. 97—107). This will provide the basis for this week's study.

### **Calvin's prayer rule #1: Joyful Fear (Keller, pg. 97—99)**

·Read: Psalm 130:3-4.

Our attitude in prayer should be one of both joy and reverence. To fear God is to be in complete awe of his power and holiness. In Psalm 130 we see that God is feared (revered) not only for his perfect judgment, but also because of his ability to forgive.

·**How does forgiveness of sins enable us to “fear” Him in reverent worship?**

### **Calvin's prayer rule #2: Spiritual Insufficiency (Keller, pg. 99—101).**

·Read: Jeremiah 29:12-14.

We should come before God with an understanding of our complete dependence upon Him. We should converse honestly with God about all our flaws and weaknesses. God knows and sees all of our shortcomings.

·**What does “Seeking God with all our heart” (Jer. 29:13) mean to you? How does repentance fit into this picture?**

### **Calvin's prayer rules #3 & #4: Restful Trust yet Confident Hope (Keller, pg. 101—103).**

Keller combines Calvin's rules #3 and #4 .

·Read: John 16:22-24, see also Jeremiah 29:12-14.

We can pray with confidence that God hears us and will act on behalf of His children. However, we must also submit to God's plan when His answer is not the one we wanted. We can trust that His larger plan for our good is always at work.

·**Share or reflect upon an instance when God answered your prayer in an unexpected (possibly unwanted) way. What was the outcome?**

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### **Calvin's prayer rule #5: The Rule Against Rules (Keller, pg. 103—107).**

·Refer to: John 16:22-24, Jeremiah 29:12-14.

Grace rules all. Calvin cautions us that we should not conclude that following any set of rules can make our prayers worthy to be heard. Remember our access to God is only possible because of His grace. Our ability (or inability) to follow “rules” of prayer does not affect the access to our Father that He gives freely to those who believe in His son, Jesus Christ.

When we pray “in the name of Jesus” we are declaring our trust in Christ alone for our salvation and eternal relationship with God. We are also making a statement that our prayer intends to honor and bring glory to Jesus.

·**Honestly explore the motivations of your heart in your prayer. Do your prayers have, in mind, the ultimate goal of honoring and glorifying Christ? Share your thoughts with your group.**