

IMAGES OF PRAYER

Which images do you most identify with?

- Prayer is not a lovely sedan for a sightseeing trip around the city. Prayer is a truck that goes straight to the warehouse, backs up, loads, and comes home with the goods... ***E M Bounds***
- Real prayer comes not from gritting our teeth, but from falling in love.
Richard Foster
- ...we irrigate the garden of our life with the prayer of loving attentiveness.
Theresa of Avila
- Prayer is keeping company with God
- Prayer is warfare – we engage in battle with the enemy
- Prayers must be red hot. It is the fervent prayer that is effectual. Coldness of spirit hinders praying; prayer cannot live in a wintry atmosphere. It takes fire to make prayers go. ***EM Bounds***
- There is no need to rush around feverishly looking for a prayer life: we need to slow down and look deeply within. – ***Kenneth Leech (True Prayer)***
- Christian prayer is inseparable from resistance and struggle. Yet so often we mistake the signs of prayer for signs of an inability to pray.
Kenneth Leech (True Prayer)

PRAYER There are no experts in prayer

Theology/psychology go together

- I cannot take my relationship with God seriously without it having an impact on how well I know myself.
- If theology and psychology cannot be separated then knowing God goes hand in hand with knowing myself.

Intercession

Intercession has me setting the agenda. This is good but limited if it is my primary model of prayer.

PRAYER WORKS/DOESN'T WORK

This is a very transactional view of prayer, Prayer is a deal – I ask, God delivers.

If prayer includes

- listening to the Lord
- noticing what the Spirit is saying to me
- responding to what I notice around me and within me
- then the language of prayer 'working, or not working' is no longer appropriate. We are unlikely to even think of using it.

Prayer becomes relational, transformational, not just a means of acquiring something, no matter how good the items required may be: marriage, children, conversion, healing etc

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

- In contemplative prayer, what we contemplate sets the agenda rather than the agenda always being my own issues and concerns.

What is contemplation?

- sitting with a small portion of scripture, a story of Jesus for instance and try to place yourself there – to notice the expression on the faces of the people in the story, or to become one of the participants, or just to sit and wait to see what the Holy Spirit will bring to me.
- Use your imagination.
- The point is not to read lots, but to 'see and hear' more deeply. This is NOT a bible study. I pay attention to my *feelings* and allow them to inform me.

Leaders need to know themselves

- Many Christian leaders lead out of insecurity without realising it.
- If they were aware of their insecurity they could take measures to mitigate against this (who isn't insecure to at least some degree) but if they don't even realise it's there they aren't trying to reduce its impact on themselves and others.
- We are shaped by our woundedness so we need to know where we're wounded.

GOD'S MANY VOICES

- As we grow in prayer, we cultivate an ability to hear God in a much wider range of voices.
- He speaks through a tree, a friend, an enemy, a film, a novel, a song, a death, a birth, sickness, frustration, joy etc.
- Prayer is learning to cultivate the ability to notice his voice and respond to it.

CHANGE IS SLOW God rarely works quickly.

THERE ARE SEASONS

- like nature we have seasons in our own lives.
- Even in relationships there is fluctuation.
- We sometimes feel more patient, more in love, more excited, more frustrated etc
- Those feelings tell me about myself.
- They are therefore extremely valuable.

FREEDOM AND SELF KNOWLEDGE

- If I don't allow my feelings to inform me, they may manipulate me and I will not be free.
- my feelings produce the substance of great conversation with the Lord and of great insight into my own life.

Conclusion

- There is not a single model which everyone must follow – people pray in different ways, and have different struggles in prayer.

Distractions

- Sometimes we need to pray through the distractions before we can concentrate on anything else.
- Don't even call them distractions – they are vital elements of your life

Slowing down to pray contemplatively can be difficult

- This is an acquired skill for many people, it doesn't come naturally
- be prepared for times of pain, aching, discomfort.
- You may want to stop, don't let your feelings dictate to you – be informed by them. What am I aching about? Etc
- Incorporate this into your prayer rhythm

Journal so you won't forget
 So you notice patterns

- What is your image/s of prayer?
- What do you think of the idea of your *feelings* informing you in prayer?
- What do you think of the idea of scripture leading you into prayer?