Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God
by Timothy Keller

Analytical Outline prepared by Brian M. Sandifer

I. Introduction. Why Write a Book on Prayer?
   a. Two Kinds of Prayer?
      i. Communion-centered
      ii. Kingdom-centered
   b. Communion and Kingdom
      i. In the Psalms
      ii. Scripture’s theology of prayer
      iii. The great older writers on prayer
   c. Through Duty to Delight
      i. No wedge between communion- and kingdom-centered prayer
      ii. Prayer is both conversation and encounter with God
      iii. Prayer is both awe and intimacy, struggle and reality
      iv. Prayer is a journey

PART ONE. Desiring Prayer
II. Chapter 1. Desiring God
   a. “We’re Not Going to Make It”
      i. Author’s professional and personal dissatisfaction with his understanding of prayer
      ii. Illustration: Keller marriage won’t make it through life’s challenges without daily prayer together
   b. “Can’t Anyone Teach Me to Pray?”
      i. Flannery O’Connor’s discovery: Living well depends on the reordering of our loves
      ii. O’Connor’s frustration with the form of a prayer journal inhibiting her learning to pray
   c. A Confusing Landscape
      i. Non-Christian prayer: Transcendental Mediation
      ii. Christian prayer
         1. Centering
         2. Contemplative
         3. “Listening”
         4. Lectio divina
   d. “An Intelligent Mysticism”
      i. Counterintuitive course: first avoid new books on prayer
      ii. Older consensus: prayer combines affections of the heart and the convictions of the mind in an encounter with God
   e. Learning to Pray
      i. Author’s four changes to private devotional life
      ii. Breakthroughs
1. New sweetness in Christ; more restful experiences of love
2. New bitterness; more wrestling to see God triumph over evil

iii. Benefits
1. Genuine self-knowledge
2. Experience the deep change of the reordering of our loves

III. Chapter 2. The Greatness of Prayer

a. The Supremacy of Prayer
   i. The most important thing God can give us: to know him better
   ii. The priority of the inner life with God

b. The Integrity of Prayer
   i. Effects of giving our outer life priority
   ii. Giving priority to the inner life doesn’t mean an individualistic life
   iii. Depths of public and private prayer grow together

c. The Hardness of Prayer
   i. Prayer is naturally one of the hardest things in the world
   ii. A standing incident of religious life: a consciousness of the absence of God
   iii. Pursuit of God in prayer eventually bears fruit
   iv. Prayer seasons of dryness and struggle are common

d. The Centrality of Prayer
   i. To fail to pray is a sin against God’s glory
   ii. The Bible is filled with prayer
      1. Prayer permeated the lives of the OT saints
      2. Prayer permeated the life of Jesus Christ
      3. Prayer permeated the lives of NT saints
   iii. Prayer must be all-pervasive in our lives

e. The Richness of Prayer
   i. The danger of defining prayer: reduce to its essence
   ii. Prayer is rich with infinities and immensities
   iii. A poem about prayer by George Herbert
      1. Prayer is a natural human instinct
      2. Prayer is a nourishing friendship
      3. Prayer tunes your heart to God
      4. Prayer changes those around us
      5. Prayer is a journey, a pilgrimage, never fulfilled in this life
      6. Prayer help us endure spiritually lean times
      7. Prayer means knowing yourself as well as God
      8. Prayer changes things by God’s power
      9. Prayer is a refuge in Christ
      10. Prayer changes us to see the world differently
      11. Prayer unites us with God himself
      12. Prayer gradually clears our vision and understanding

PART TWO. Understanding Prayer

IV. Chapter 3. What is Prayer?

a. A Global Phenomenon
   i. The great monotheistic religions
ii. Other major world religions
iii. Secular, nonreligious people
iv. Not universal, but global
v. Not all prayer is the same

b. Types of Prayer
   i. Darwinian model (Freud)
   ii. Inward-focused meditation and contemplation (Jung)
      1. To control or adapt to our environment
      2. To gain health and wholeness by realizing our oneness with Reality

c. Mystical versus “Prophetic” Prayer
   i. Freud & Jung (superiority of the mystical) vs. Heiler (superiority of the prophetic)
   ii. Differences between mystical and prophetic prayer (according to Heiler)
      1. Nearness of God
      2. Understanding of grace
      3. Aim
      4. Climax
      5. Tendency of distinction between the self and God
      6. Elements providing intimacy with God

d. The Mystical Prophetic
   i. Priority of prophetic, without rejecting mystical
   ii. Example and testimony of Jonathan Edwards (prophetic with mystical overtones)
   iii. A working definition
      1. Ultimately a verbal response of faith to a transcendent God’s Word and his grace
      2. Can lead regularly to personal encounter with God, which can be a wondrous, mysterious, awe-filled experience

e. An Instinct, a Gift
   i. A human instinct
      1. Divinitatis sensum (humanity made in God’s image)
      2. Definition: prayer is a personal, communicative response to the knowledge of God
   ii. A response to the knowledge of God
      1. Level one: human instinct
      2. Level two: spiritual gift
   iii. Sources of the knowledge of God
      1. Nature
      2. Scripture
   iv. A gift
      1. First, God speaks to us through his living Word
      2. Then, we respond (answer) in prayer
      3. This is the divine-human “conversation”

f. A Conversation, an Encounter
   i. Conversation: prayer is responding to God
1. Instinctive prayer: reaction to a general sense of God’s reality
2. Spiritual Gift: genuine, personal conversation in reply to God’s specific verbal revelation

ii. Encounter: prayer is self-disclosure
   1. Knowing God and being known
   2. Definition: Prayer is continuing a conversation that God has started through his Word and his grace, which eventually becomes a full encounter with him

  g. Listening and Answering
     i. Prayer makes it possible to love God for himself alone and be fundamentally content in all circumstances
     ii. Power of our prayers
        1. Not primarily in effort, striving, technique
        2. Primarily in our knowledge of God
     iii. Jesus Christ is the glorious Word of God and our access to the Father by one Spirit

V. Chapter 4. Conversing with God
   a. Meeting a Personal God
      i. Love not possible for Eastern religions in which God is impersonal or unipersonal
      ii. Love is possible for Christianity because God is Triune
      iii. Objections to the idea of God communicating through words
      iv. Christian prayer is fellowship with the God who speaks
   b. Meeting God Through His Word
      i. Speech-act theory agrees with the Bible that our words get things done
      ii. God’s verbal actions are a kind of extension of himself
      iii. To trust in God’s Word = To put trust in God
      iv. The Bible is the way to actually hear God speaking and to meet God himself
   c. Prayer through Immersion in God’s Word
      i. The Bible reveals who we are praying to and how we are to pray
      ii. Our prayer vocabulary should come from immersion in the Bible’s vocabulary
      iii. Wedding of the Bible and prayer anchors your life in the real God
   d. Verbal Prayer as Response to God’s Person
      i. Christians should keep their rationality when they pray
      ii. Unbiblical and inappropriate forms of prayer
         1. Centering prayer
         2. The Jesus Prayer
      iii. Wordless prayer is not the pinnacle, rather the periodic punctuation of verbal prayer
   e. Varied Prayer as Response to God’s Glory
      i. Kinds of words to use in prayer (many we might avoid for various reasons)
         1. Exclamation of wonder
         2. Virulent complaints
3. Reasoned arguments
4. Pronouncements and verdicts
5. Appeals and requests
6. Summons and calls
7. Verdicts of self-condemnation

ii. A rich and varied prayer life springs from responding to the Bible, not our feelings and desires

f. The Tragedy of Untethered Prayer
i. Prayer untethered to the Bible will tend to avoid the A.C.T.S. categories of prayer
ii. Without prayer that answers the God of the Bible, we will only be talking to ourselves
iii. If we imagine God saying various things to us, how can we avoid self-deception?
iv. We cannot be sure God is speaking to us unless we read it in the Bible

g. Finding the Heart to Pray
i. Examples from the life of King David
ii. God speaks to us in his Word, and we respond in prayer, entering into the divine conversation of communion with God
iii. How to find a heart to pray: remember who you are in Christ

VI. Chapter 5. Encountering God
a. Whom We Encounter: A Tri-Personal God
i. Prayers can only be heard by and through the triune God
ii. Implications of prayer to and through the triune God
iii. God wants to share the inter-trinitarian joy with us in prayer

b. Whom We Encounter: Our Heavenly Father
i. God is Father only to those whom he has adopted by his grace
ii. To be a child of God means access to God
iii. Prayer is the way to sense, appropriate, and experience this access and fatherly love

c. How We Encounter: The Spirit of Adoption
i. Christians have child-like confidence in God’s loving attention as to a parent
ii. The Holy Spirit gives Christians assurance their relationship with God is not based on performance but on parental love
iii. The Holy Spirit intercedes in prayer for Christians
iv. Through prayer Christians existentially know
   1. God is handling our lives well
   2. Our bad things will turn out for good
   3. Our good things cannot be taken from us
   4. The best things are yet to come

d. How We Encounter: The Mediator
i. We come to the Father through the mediation of his Son Jesus Christ
ii. Illustration of John Murray mediating for his friend Edmund Clowney in prayer
iii. All ancient lands and cultures had temples because people understand there is a gap between us and God
iv. The Son of God became human in Jesus Christ thus bridging the gap
e. Prayer in Jesus’ Name
   i. Praying in Jesus’ name is about qualification and access
   ii. Illustration of an ancient king granting an audience a hearing
   iii. Christians always have an audience because of what Jesus has done on the cross for us
f. Knowing God for Who He Is
   i. The ground motive of prayer is to know God better and enjoy his presence
   ii. Contrast with the natural way to pray which is to procure things from God
   iii. We will pray with the proper motives when we begin to understand our benefits and blessings in Christ
   iv. With the gospel, Christians may seek for themselves, not for natural selfish motives
g. The Cost of Prayer
   i. Jesus gave up his access to the Father so we might have access
   ii. If you had or have a bad relationship with your earthly mother or father that makes you feel cut off from God, you need Christ to remove your barriers to prayer
   iii. Prayer turns theology into experience

PART THREE. Learning Prayer
VII. Chapter 6. Letters on Prayer
a. Augustine on Prayer
   i. Before you know what to pray for and how to pray for it, you must become a person who accounts himself desolate in this world and with disordered loves
   ii. Pray for a happy life: to love God for what he is in himself, and ourselves and our neighbors for his sake
   iii. Study the Lord’s Prayer and let it guide you
   iv. In tribulation, pour out your heart’s desire, but remember the wisdom and goodness of God as you do so
b. Martin Luther’s “A Simple Way to Pray”
   i. Cultivate prayer as a habit of regular discipline
   ii. Focus your thoughts, and warm and engage your affections for prayer through practicing meditation
c. The Skill of Meditation
   i. Divide each biblical command into four parts
      1. Instruction, to turn the text into a school book
      2. Thanksgiving, to turn the text into a song book
      3. Confession, to turn the text into a penitential book
      4. Prayer, to turn the text into a prayer book
   ii. Work out the truth of the text as it affects your relationship to
      1. God
      2. Yourself
      3. The world
d. Spiritual “Riffing” on the Lord’s Prayer  
   i. Pray improvisations on a theme, paraphrasing the Lord’s Prayer  
   ii. This will help avoid the difficulty of distracting thoughts  
   iii. This forces you to use all the full language and basic forms of prayer  
   iv. This forces you out of meditation into actual prayer  
   v. Pray from the heart  

e. The Preaching of the Holy Spirit  
   i. Keep a lookout for the Holy Spirit and follow his lead without obstructions  
   ii. This is a balance: expecting we will hear God speak, but through his Word  
   iii. Prayer is building on the study of Scripture through meditation  
      1. Answering the Word in prayer to the Lord  
      2. Be aware the Holy Spirit may begin preaching to you  
      3. When this happens, drop your routines and pay close attention  

VIII. Chapter 7. Rules for Prayer  

a. The Joyful Fear  
   i. First rule of prayer: principle of reverence (fear of God)  
   ii. Illustration of apprehensiveness when meeting a personal hero  
   iii. A crucial part of prayer is a sense of awe which concentrates the thoughts and elevates the heart  

b. Spiritual Insufficiency  
   i. Second rule of prayer: spiritual humility  
   ii. Drop all pretense and flee all phoniness  
   iii. To the degree you shed the unreality of self-sufficiency that sin causes in your heart and mind, to that degree your prayer life will become richer and deeper  

c. Restful Trust yet Confident Hope  
   i. Third rule of prayer: have a submissive trust in God  
   ii. Fourth rule of prayer: pray with confidence and hope  
   iii. Reasons why we ought to pray for anything with fervor and confidence  
   iv. These two balancing truths are complementary not contradictory  
   v. Pray boldly and with faith, and if you don’t receive what you ask use prayer to be enabled to rest in God’s will  

d. The Rule Against Rules  
   i. Fifth rule of prayer: remember prayer are answered not by our meriting them in prayer, but according to God’s grace  
   ii. Prayer should be shaped by and in accord with God’s grace  
   iii. Illustration of flicking the light switch to turn on the light bulb  
   iv. Remember the words “in Jesus’ name” are not a magic incantation, for God is free to answer the prayers of believers and unbelievers  
   v. Praying in Jesus’ name should be an expression of trust in Christ our mediator and God our loving Father  

e. Jesus’ Claims on the Father  
   i. Jesus is the only obedient king-son of God  
   ii. Therefore understand your prayers as insufficient prayed in your name, and only sufficient on the ground of Jesus Christ’s claims
IX. Chapter 8. The Prayer of Prayers
   a. The Danger of Familiarity
      i. May be the single set of words spoken more often than any other in the history of the world
      ii. The means Jesus gives for the spiritual experience we hunger for
      iii. We don’t hear it because it is so familiar, therefore listen to three great mentors on the Lord’s Prayer
   b. “Our Father Who Art in Heaven”
      i. Calvin: to call God “Father” is to pray in Jesus’ name
      ii. Luther: Before plunging into prayer first recollect our situation and realize our standing in Christ
      iii. Calvin: The name of God as “Father” frees us from all distrust
   c. “Hallowed Be Thy Name”
      i. “Hallowed” is an opaque word
         1. Seldom used today
         2. Idea of holiness is alien in secular society
         3. Seeming illogic of the prayer (isn’t God’s name already holy?)
      ii. Luther: We pray our use of God’s name be kept holy
      iii. Luther & Augustine: a request that faith in God would spread worldwide, that more and more people would honor God and his name
      iv. Calvin: We pray to have a heart of grateful joy toward God and a wondrous sense of his beauty
   d. “Thy Kingdom Come”
      i. Augustine: we pray to receive God’s rule because he need his kingdom to come
      ii. Calvin: a Lordship petition asking God to extend his royal power over every part of our lives so we will want to obey with joyful hearts
      iii. Luther: a prayer that yearns for future life of justice and peace, and for the same to grow in our hearts
   e. “Thy Will Be Done”
      i. Luther: to pray with childlike trust for grace to bear all sorts of trials
      ii. Luther & Augustine: to pray that vengeance on our enemies will be God’s alone
      iii. Calvin: submit our wills and feelings to God so as to avoid becoming despondent, bitter, and hardened by our circumstances
      iv. Summary of first three petitions is we begin praying about God, giving first place to praising and honoring him
   f. “Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”
      i. Augustine: give me neither poverty (lest I resent you) or riches (lest I forget you)
      ii. Calvin & Augustine: as without desperation trusting God will provide for our needs
      iii. Luther: a social dimension that asks for a thriving economy, good employment, and a just society
   g. “Forgive Us Our Debts as We Forgive Our Debtors”
i. Luther: seek God’s forgiveness to test our spiritual reality and challenge our pride
ii. Calvin: to seek the good of those who have wronged us, and confess the hypocrisy of holding grudges

h. “Lead Us Not into Temptation”
i. Augustine: pray not to avoid temptation, but to avoid being led into it
ii. Calvin: deliverance on the “prosperous” right from riches, power, and honors that tempt us to sinfully believe we don’t need God
iii. Calvin: deliverance on the “adverse” left from poverty, disgrace, contempt, and afflictions that tempt us to sinfully despair, lose hope, and to become angrily estranged from God

i. “Deliver Us from Evil”
i. Luther: pray for deliverance from specific evils that emanate for Satan’s kingdom—everything that threatens our bodily welfare
ii. Augustine: pray for protection from evil outside us (enemies and malignant forces in the world)

j. “For Thine Is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory Forever”
i. Augustine & Luther: do not treat this portion of the pray
ii. Calvin: return to the truth of God’s complete sufficiency and the believer’s secure tranquility in him

k. “Give, Forgive, and Deliver—Us”
i. Calvin: the content and basic patter of the prayer is more important than the words
ii. Calvin: the Lord’s Prayer must stamp itself on our prayer, shaping them all the way down
iii. Luther: twice daily pray through the Lord’s Prayer, paraphrasing and personalizing it as introduction to more free-form praise and petition
iv. The Lord’s Prayer is in plural form, therefore the prayers of Christians ought to be public to the advancement of the believer’s fellowship
v. It takes a community of people to get to know the various aspects of God, like it takes a community to know a single person more thoroughly

X. Chapter 9. The Touchstones of Prayer
a. What Prayer Is
i. Work—Prayer Is a Duty and a Discipline
   1. Pray regularly, persistently, resolutely, tenaciously, at least daily, and regardless your feeling like it
   2. Prayer must be persevering
   3. Prayer is hard work, and often in agony

ii. Responding to the Word—Prayer Is Conversing with God
   1. Respond to God’s voice discerned subjectively within the heart
   2. Understand God as primarily speaking to us through the Scripture
   3. To know God: read Scripture, meditate on what it reveals of God, turn that vision into praise first before going further into prayer

iii. Prayer Is a Balanced Interaction of Praise, Confession, Thanks, and Petition
   1. None of these forms of prayer is preferred to any other
2. All these forms of prayer are interactive and stimulate one another

b. What Prayer Requires
   i. Grace—Prayer Must Be “In Jesus’ Name,” Based on the Gospel
      1. Come to God fully cognizant that we are being heard because of the costly grace in which we stand
      2. Ordinarily prayer is addressed to the Father with gratitude to the Son and dependence on the Spirit
   ii. Fear—Prayer Is the Heart Engaged in Loving Awe
       1. Prayer should engage the affections with due apprehension of God’s power, majesty, and grace
       2. Approach God with neither a sentimental or causal familiarity nor a stilted, remove formality
       3. Remember your place and privilege regarding the awesome thing you are doing in approaching God in prayer
   iii. Helplessness—Prayer Is Accepting Weakness and Dependence
       1. Simply connect Jesus to your absolute helplessness, your sense of fragility and dependence
       2. Your helplessness can be a source of confidence because Jesus is calling believers to intimate communion with him
       3. When you feel most completely helpless, be more secure in the knowledge that God is with you and listening to your prayer

c. What Prayer Gives
   i. Perspective—Prayer Reorients Your View toward God
      1. Brings new perspective because God is back in the picture of our lives
      2. Prayer can wake you up to your fears, doubts, blindspots
   ii. Strength—Prayer as Spiritual Union with God
      1. Gets you ready for life’s battles
      2. Gets you strong in the Lord
      3. Prayer is the way that all the things we believe in and that Christ has won for us actually become our strength
   iii. Spiritual Reality—Prayer Seeks a Heart Sense of the Presence of God
      1. Our abstract knowledge of God becomes existentially real to us
      2. We “hear” God by a sense on the heart, not the physical senses

d. Where Prayer Takes Us
   i. Self-Knowledge—Prayer Requires and Creates Honesty and Self-Knowledge
      1. By true prayer we acquire true knowledge of ourselves and avoid deceiving ourselves
      2. By true prayer we are able to uncover in our hearts those things that lead us to sins small and large
      3. Through prayer we become unmasked, more honest with God that we are in any human relationship
   ii. Trust—Prayer Requires and Creates Restful Trust and Confident Hope
      1. Prayer must combine submission and the heart to accept thankfully from God’s hand whatever he gives us in his wisdom
2. Pray must also be specific, intense, repeated, and confident that God will hear us
3. We are imbalanced if we over-stress submission (resignation to his will) or importunity (faithful persistence)

iii. Surrender—Prayer Requires and Creates Surrender of the Whole Life in Love to God
1. Ditch all competing concerns that compete with God the moment your discern them
2. You should not begin to pray for all you want until you realize that in God you have all you need
3. Don’t use prayer to pursue many things that we want too much
4. Prayer—though it is often draining, even an agony—is in the long term the greatest source of power that is possible

PART FOUR. Deepening Prayer
XI. Chapter 10. As Conversation: Meditating on His Word
a. Gateway to Prayer
i. Psalms are the prayer book of the Bible
ii. Meditation is the third ingredient alongside prayer and Bible study
   1. Meditation promises stability
   2. Meditation brings the promise of substance, of character
   3. Meditation brings blessedness
b. Meditation and the Mind
   i. Ponder and question the text thoroughly
   ii. Meditation requires first understanding something about the text
   iii. Meditation is founded on the work of sound biblical interpretation and study
   iv. Meditation is quite rational, even argumentative. It fills the mind with rational thought.
   v. Meditation stimulates our analysis and reflection, centering it on the glory and grace of God

c. Meditation and the Heart
   i. Meditation also requires heart contemplation
   ii. Meditation takes truth down into the heart until it begins to melt and shape our reactions to God, ourselves, and the world
   iii. Examples of mediation and contemplation on Ps 103
d. Fixing the Mind
   i. This is the first “movement” of meditation that can be done by several methods
   ii. Select and get a clear view of a biblical truth, reading a text slowing and answering questions about it
   iii. Ask application questions of the passage
   iv. Take one crucial verse and think through it by emphasizing each word, then ask questions about each word
   v. Paraphrase the verse in your own words to send it into your inner being in your own heart language
   vi. Memorize a text
e. Inclining the Heart
   i. This is the second “movement” of meditation: incline the heart until its 
      hope and joy more fully rests in the things learned in the first movement. 
      Here are a few methods.
      1. Ask questions of the truth discerned from the text
      2. Look more deeply at yourself
      3. Consider the timing of your insight
   ii. Remember meditation doesn’t stop at understanding, it aims for the heart
f. Enjoying or Crying Out
   i. This is the third “movement” of meditation: depending where you are 
      along a spectrum, either savor or cry out to God
      1. Respond to the degree to which the Holy Spirit gives illumination 
         and spiritual reality
      2. Enjoy the presence of God, or
      3. Admit the absence of God and ask for his mercy and help
   ii. Remember our expression of either joy or grief are both ways to show 
      love to God

g. Meditating on the Incarnate Word
   i. Jesus was the great Meditator. Look to him when you fall into despair of 
      meditating.
   ii. Warm yourself at the fire of God’s love for you in Christ
   iii. By looking to Jesus you will flourish and delight in the law and the gospel

XII. Chapter 11. As Encounter: Seeking His Face

   a. Being Rich but Living Poor
      i. Appropriate the truths of our riches in Christ into our inner being (Eph 
         3:14, 16-19)
      ii. Expect and pray for intense spiritual encounters with God
   b. “The Truth Begins to Shine”
      i. Christians need the Holy Spirit to spiritually sensitize them or the truths 
         they mouth and assent to will make no real difference in how they live
      ii. Mental knowing must be coupled with experientially tasting
      iii. When the Spirit does his word, the truths of the Word and gospel lift us 
           up, move us, strike us, maybe melt and compel us
   c. Knowing the Father
      i. An aspect of communion with God is a deeper understanding and 
         appropriation of our family relationship with the Father
      ii. The Spirit gives you joyful fearlessness and assurance that you are a child 
          of the only one whose opinion and power matters
   d. Grasping the Love
      i. Through the Spirit’s blessing our meditation on the saving work of Jesus
      ii. The love of God is wide, long, deep, and high
   e. The Face of Christ
      i. The Spirit must enable our hearts to sense Christ’s reality and presence
      ii. Beholding the face of Christ unveiled (2 Cor 3:18) by beginning to find 
         Christ beautiful for who he is in himself
Meditate deeply on the gospel to remove those things that veil our beholding him as he is

f. Keeping Truth and Experience Together
   i. Be spiritually minded: have our minds really exercised with delight about heavenly things, especially Christ himself at God’s right hand
   ii. Beware of mysticism by keeping spiritual experience tied to the Scripture
   iii. You must be able to existentially access your doctrinal convictions, otherwise you will experience nominal Christianity or eventually nonbelief
   iv. Criticism of the Roman Catholic mystical and contemplative prayer traditions
   v. It is better that our affections exceed our light from the defect of our understandings, than that our light exceed our affections from the corruption of our wills. ~ John Owen

g. Cautions and Appreciation
   i. John Owen and Jonathan Edwards are Protestants with an admirable biblical mysticism
   ii. Read the medieval mystics with appreciation but also plenty of caution
      1. Caution regarding the Mass
      2. Appreciation regarding their sense of God’s holiness and transcendence
   iii. Augustine was another biblical mystic worth appreciating

PART FIVE. Doing Prayer

XIII. Chapter 12. Awe: Praising His Glory
   a. The Alpha Prayer
      i. Praise is primary because it motivates other kinds of prayer
      ii. Praise and adoration are the necessary preconditions for the proper formulation for all other kinds of prayer
   b. The Health of Praise
      i. Praise is primary because it has power to heal what is wrong with us and create inner spiritual health
      ii. Insights from C.S. Lewis
         1. We want people to admire God so they won’t miss out
         2. We need others to recognize we are praising God
         3. We must praise God or live in unreality and poverty
   c. The Reordering of Our Loves
      i. Praise directly develops love for God
      ii. Insights from Augustine
         1. I am what I love
         2. People seek happiness by attaching themselves to things they believe will make them happy, which is experienced as love
         3. Because of sin, we misidentify what will make us happy
         4. Ultimate reason for our misery is that we don’t love God supremely
         5. Our ultimate loves are constitutive of our identity
6. To change people most profoundly, we must change what they worship

d. The Importance of Thanks
   i. Thanksgiving is a subcategory of praise
   ii. Praising God for what he has done
   iii. Why God takes thanksgiving so seriously: it is cosmic ingratitude
   iv. Assuming we keep our lives together robs us of the joy and relief of giving thanks to God

e. The Habit of Praise
   i. Ways to develop better habits of mind
      1. C.S. Lewis. Develop every pleasure into a channel for adoration
      2. Thomas Cranmer. Move from a grounding in God’s nature, to the petition, to the aspiration
      3. Matthew Henry. Turn all kinds of prayers in the Bible into your own prayers
         a. Adoring God
         b. Thanking God

f. The Omega Prayer
   i. Psalm 150 ends the Psalter with unbroken praise
   ii. All prayer should and will end in praise
   iii. A lack of praise of God is a lack of reality, and praising him helps us enter the real world and enjoy him more fully
   iv. Prayer takes something you believe about God that is ignorable and detached from how you live your life and makes it vivid

XIV. Chapter 13. Intimacy: Finding His Grace
a. Free Forgiveness; Infinite Cost
   i. The conundrum of Exodus 34:6-7
      1. God forgives but does not leave the guilty unpunished
      2. Tension drives the plotline of the whole OT
      3. Is our covenant relationship with God conditional or unconditional? How will this be solved?
   ii. The person and work of Jesus Christ solves the conundrum
      1. No sin can now bring us into condemnation because of Christ’s atoning sacrifice
      2. Sin is so serious and grievous to God that Jesus had to die
   iii. Spiritually fatal errors to avoid
      1. Think forgiveness is easy for God to give
      2. Doubt the reality and thoroughness of our pardon

b. Remembering the Freeness of Forgiveness
   i. Gospel repentance is not a grueling, self-punishing penitence
   ii. Legalistic repentance is self-righteous
   iii. God would be unjust to deny us forgiveness because Jesus earned our acceptance
   iv. Legalistic repentance is destructive
   v. Grace is not conditioned on perfectly penitent emotions
vi. The more we know we are forgiven, the more we repent, the faster we grow and change, the deeper our humility and our joy

c. Remembering the Costliness of Forgiveness
   i. If you forget the costliness of sin, your prayers of confession and repentance will be shallow and trivial
   ii. Confessing sins implies forsaking those sins
   iii. There is a false kind of repentance that is really self-pity
   iv. Real repentance involves both admitting and rejecting with the right attitude
   v. Case studies
      1. Psalm 51
      2. Psalm 32
   vi. Just as real repentance begins only where blame shifting ends, so it also begins where self-pity ends

d. John Owen on Killing Sin
   i. Aim to move beyond seeing only the danger of sin (its consequences), and find way to convince our hearts of the grievousness of sin
   ii. A range of doctrines to use on ourselves to weaken sin’s hold on us
   iii. Devise ways of talking or even preaching to your own heart, using biblical truths that especially weaken our particular wrong beliefs and attitudes
   iv. Owen’s example soliloquies
   v. Privilege the truths at the heart of the gospel because the law cannot change a sinful heart

e. Self-Examination and Repentance
   i. Prayer should be a time to examine our lives and find sins that otherwise we would be too insensitive or busy to acknowledge
   ii. Examine yourself and consider the free grace of Jesus until your heart begins to change
   iii. Tools of prayerful and meditative examination
      1. Ten Commandments
      2. Heidelberg Catechism
      3. Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms
      4. Fruit of the Spirit
      5. George Whitefield: Features of a vital Christian life
         a. Deep humility
         b. A well-guided zeal
         c. A burning love
         d. A “single” eye
   iv. Examples of prayers of repentance for particular sins
      1. Pride
      2. Coldness and irritability
      3. Anxiety and fearfulness

f. Jesus Can Get the Spot Out
   i. Jesus came to bring the reality to which all the ceremonial rites pointed—final atonement and cleansing from sin
   ii. Illustration of Lady Macbeth unable to get the blood off her hand
iii. Jesus died on the cross to get out the spots and stains that we cannot remove ourselves, so go to him in prayer looking at the cross, and both admit and forsake your sin

XV. Chapter 14. Struggle: Asking His Help
a. Strenuous Petition
   i. Supplication seems easy but can be deceptively difficult
   ii. We are prone to indulge our appetites
   iii. We are prone to ritual as ways of procuring blessings
   iv. We are prone to timidity
   v. We must learn to ask, and to ask rightly
b. The Power of Prayer
   i. In the affairs of history (Jas 5:16)
   ii. One of the most practical mysteries is how God maintains his control of history and still makes prayer and action responsible within history
   iii. If we believe both parts of this mystery, we have great incentive for diligent effort and a great sense of God’s arms under us
c. How We Should Ask
   i. WSC 98: Lift our desires to God with a view to his wisdom
   ii. Arguing with God: lay before God also the reasons why we think that what we ask for is the best thing
   iii. Tell God you will yield to whatever answer he gives, and believe it
   iv. No such thing as an unanswered prayer from a child of God
      1. God wants the best for his children
      2. We already have God the ultimate good thing
      3. The Spirit mediates your prayer before God
      4. Our prayers have a way of shaping our own motives
d. Two Purposes of Petitionary Prayer
   i. External (e.g., Ps 5, a morning prayer)
      1. God effects the circumstances of history
      2. Spread our worldly concerns before God
   ii. Internal (e.g., Ps 4, an evening prayer)
      1. Receive peace and rest in God
      2. Pray with restful submissiveness, knowing God is wiser than you
      3. Self-communing or meditation
e. What We Should Ask For
   i. Asking
      1. For daily bread
      2. For others and the world (intercessory prayer)
   ii. Complaining (i.e., lament)
      1. Wrestle with God in the midst of suffering and difficulty
      2. How long O Lord?
      3. Circumstances that evoke complaint or lament
      4. Pitch-darkness prayers (e.g., Pss 39, 88)
      5. Why we don’t complain and lament
         a. Subtle legalism
         b. Soft moralism
c. Legacy of Platonism

iii. Waiting
   1. Be extremely patient with God’s timing
   2. Sometimes it takes years of petitionary prayer to gain this perspective
   3. Sometimes we need to be changed ourselves before we can receive something without harming ourselves

f. Jesus’ Unanswered Prayer
   i. Some requests that God turns down are shattering
   ii. The Christian knows God will answer his prayer because he did not answer Jesus’ prayer when he called
       1. Sinners deserve to have their prayers unanswered
       2. In the gospel we find why Jesus’ prayer was turned down so that our prayers might be heard on his merit
       3. Jesus got the penalty our sins deserved; we get the blessing he earned

XVI. Chapter 15. Practice: Daily Prayer

a. A History of Daily Prayer
   i. We won’t develop the habit of praying without ceasing unless we take up the discipline of regular, daily prayer
   ii. The medieval Daily Office. Proved too taxing (physically, emotionally, spiritually)
   iii. Protestants revised the Daily Office
       1. Morning Prayer read two Bible chapters
       2. Evensong read two Bible chapters
       3. Immersion in the Psalms, read completely through in a month
       4. Lectio continua
   iv. Most Protestants settled into a prescription of morning private prayer and evening family prayer
   v. Modern practice of Quiet Time
       1. Bible Study
          a. Is there any example for me to follow?
          b. Is there any command for me to obey?
          c. Is there any error for me to avoid?
          d. Is there any sin for me to forsake?
          e. Is there any promise for me to claim?
          f. Is there any new thought about God himself?
       2. Prayer
          a. Confession
          b. Thanksgiving and praise
          c. Intercession for others
          d. Supplication for ourselves
       3. Tendency is to be too interpretive and rationalistic, avoiding the more experiential aspects of prayer

b. Doing Daily Prayer Today
i. Evangelicals have sought guidance in prayer in Catholic and Orthodox spiritual practices

ii. These practices have benefits and drawbacks (more balanced prayers, but too rigorous a schedule)

iii. The solution is to return to the Protestant theologians of 16th-18th centuries

iv. Suggestions

1. Prayer should be more often than once daily. Twice daily is good, but don’t be too rigid on one schedule. Morning and evening, and perhaps once midday.

2. Prayer should be more biblical and grounded in systematic Bible reading, studying, and disciplined meditation on passages

3. Prayer should be more interwoven with the corporate prayer of the church. Corporate prayer structure should shape our private prayer

4. Prayer should include meditation and in general we should expect experience in the full range

c. A Pattern for Daily Prayer

i. Helpful examples from the book “My Path of Prayer”

ii. Framework

1. Evocation

   a. Take a couple minutes to bring to mind and call on God

   b. Recap in your mind the Trinitarian theology of prayer

2. Meditation

   a. Listen to God’s Word

   b. Study the Bible slowly and all the way through, recording in a journal

3. Word prayer

   a. Pray the text

   b. Pray the Lord’s Prayer

4. Free prayer

   a. Pour out your heart to God in a balanced way

      i. Adoration and thanksgiving

      ii. Confession and repentance

      iii. Petition and intercession

   b. Perhaps use a prayer list

   c. Use Matthew Henry’s “A Method for Prayer” to jumpstart your prayers if they have stalled

5. Contemplation

   a. See and taste God

   b. Get lost in some aspect of God’s truth or character

   c. Follow the lead of the Spirit

iii. Remember that feeling spiritual dry after prayer is the norm for most people, but God does give times of spiritual vitality

iv. Morning Prayer: an outlined structured plan (25 minutes)

1. Approaching God

2. Bible Reading and Meditation

3. Prayer
v. Evening Prayer: an outlined structured plan (15 minutes)
   1. Approaching God
   2. Bible Reading and Meditation
   3. Prayer

vi. A Starter Plan for Daily Prayer: for beginners (15 minutes)
   1. Approaching
   2. Meditation
   3. Word Prayer
   4. Free Prayer
   5. Contemplation

d. Praying the Psalms
   i. To learn to pray in all situations with all emotions, pray the Psalter
   ii. Methods to praying the Psalms
      1. Verbatim praying
      2. Paraphrase and personalize the Psalm
      3. Responsive praying
      4. Christ-centered praying
      5. Consider the greatness and beauty of Jesus, especially in the Messianic psalms

e. Where Are You?
   i. Evaluate your situation with regard to prayer using the metaphor of your soul a boat with oars and a sail
      1. Are you “sailing”?
      2. Are you “rowing”?
      3. Are you “drifting”?
      4. Are you “sinking”?
   ii. Hope in God through prayer which is “rowing”.

f. The Great Feast
   i. Metaphor used more often in the Bible to describe fellowship with God is a feast
   ii. We are invited now to taste and see that the Lord is good (cf. Ps 34:8; 2 Cor 3:18)
   iii. Fellowship with God now may be fitful and episodic, but it is available
   iv. Don’t settle for water when we could have wine

XVII. APPENDIX. Some Other Patterns for Daily Prayer

a. A Daily Office of Three Set Hours of Prayer
   i. Morning Prayer (35 minutes)
      1. Prayer upon rising from sleep
      2. Prayer upon beginning one’s work or study
   ii. Evening Prayer (20 minutes). Prayer before sleep

b. Daily Prayers Based on the Prayers of John Calvin
   i. Prayer upon Rising from Sleep
   ii. Prayer upon Beginning One’s Work or Study
   iii. Prayer after the Midday Meal
   iv. Prayer before Sleep