

PRAYER: AWE & INTIMACY
Discussion Guide 1, Week of Jan. 13

For Small Groups: If you're re-grouping after the holidays, take some time to catch up!
Optional icebreaker question: Share one thing that made you happy and one thing that made you sad recently.

SERMON SUMMARY

- I. Prayer is an essential spiritual discipline, and a challenging one. We have many different perspectives, experiences, questions, and uncertainties about it.
- II. Prayer is an ongoing conversation with God that was initiated by God. We can talk with the true and living God (awe) and draw close to him with confidence (intimacy).
 - A. Luke 11:2 *He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.*
 - B. Hebrews 10:19-23 *Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.*
- III. Whatever your experience or perspective so far, prayer is so much more. God wants to do so much more.

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. What challenges, questions, or uncertainties do you have about prayer?

2. How do you relate to Pastor Erik's statement: *We can view prayer as something we need to do, something we should do, instead of something we get to do. It's so easy to see it as a way of getting the things we want, instead of what God wants, which is a relationship.*

3. The preaching staff is using Timothy Keller's book, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*, as a resource. In it, Keller introduces two views of prayer:

Recent writers on prayer tend to have one of two views on the subject. Most now emphasize prayer as a means to experience God's love and to know oneness with him. They promise a life of peace and of continual resting in God. Such authors often give radiant testimonies of feeling regularly surrounded by the divine presence. Other books, however, see the essence of prayer not as inward resting but as calling on God to bring in his kingdom. Prayer is viewed as a wrestling match ... not peaceful reflection but fervent supplication for the kingdom of God to come to fruition in the world and in our own lives. (p. 1-2)

This book will show that prayer is both ... We must know the awe of praising his glory, the intimacy of finding his grace, and the struggle of asking his help, all of which can lead us to know the spiritual reality of his presence. Prayer, then is both awe and intimacy, struggle and reality. These will not happen every time we pray but each should be a major component of our prayer over the course of our lives. (p. 5)

Discuss Keller's ideas. How have you experienced these two kinds of prayer? Which seems most familiar to you? Which appeals to you more?

4. Our challenge this week is to Pray Daily, to set a time and place to talk to God for at least 5-10 minutes each day. Did you set an alarm on your phone? Share about your plan.

5. *Whatever your experience or perspective so far, prayer is so much more. God wants to do so much more.* What do you hope for in your prayer life?

6. Close your time with some music, reflection, and prayer. We sang *Touch of Heaven* (Hillsong Worship) on Sunday after the sermon. The lyrics are below, and the song is here on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxxr47zEUxE>

- a. Read, listen to, or sing the song. Reflect on it, and talk about your response.
What speaks to you in the song? What phrases are meaningful to you?
What feels threatening or uncomfortable to you (if anything)?
What feelings, desires, and/or thoughts does it bring up in you?
- b. Close in prayer in whatever way you like. One suggestion: allow everyone to talk to God silently for 1-2 minutes, then ask one or two volunteers to pray out loud for the group as a whole.

Touch of Heaven

[Verse 1] And how I live for the moments
Where I'm still in Your presence
And all the noise dies down
Lord, speak to me now
You have all my attention
And I will linger and listen
I can't miss a thing

[Chorus] And Lord, I know my heart wants more of You
My heart wants something new
So I, surrender all
And all I want is to live within Your love
Be undone by who You are
My desire is to know You deeper
Lord, I will open up again
Throw my fears into the wind
I am desperate for a touch of heaven

[Verse 2] You're the fire in the morning
You're the cool in the evening
The breath in my soul
You're the life in my bones
There is no hesitation
In Your love and affection
It's the sweetest of all.