

Enliven Your Prayer Life

Week 2: What do you bring to prayer?

Opening Prayer: A Prayer to Redeem Lost Time, by Teresa of Avila

O my God! Source of all mercy! I acknowledge Your sovereign power. While recalling the wasted years that are past, I believe that You, Lord, can in an instant turn this loss to gain. Miserable as I am, yet I firmly believe that You can do all things. Please restore to me the time lost, giving me Your grace, both now and in the future, that I may appear before You in "wedding garments." Amen.

Prayer is a relationship.

How we understand ourselves and how we understand God shapes our prayer life. What impedes honesty, intimacy and vulnerability with God? Are you able to really be yourself in this relationship?

Some examination:

How do you see yourself?

How do you think God sees you?

*see 1John 3:1

How do you see God?

How do you answer Jesus asking “who do you say that I am?” (Mark 8:27-29)

Scripture as Formation--

Let scripture align your self-understanding and your God-understanding according to the truth.

“An important discipline in the life of the Spirit is spiritual reading. Through spiritual reading, we have some say over what enters into our minds. ... Do we really want our mind to become the garbage can of the world? Do we want our mind to be filled with things that confuse us, excite us, depress us, arouse us, repulse us, or attract us whether we think it is good for us or not? Clearly, we do not, but it requires real discipline to let God and not the world be the Lord of our mind. But that asks of us not just to be gentle as doves, but also cunning as serpents! Therefore spiritual reading is such a helpful discipline. Is there a book we are presently reading, a book that we have selected because it nurtures our mind and brings us closer to God? Our thoughts and feelings would be deeply affected if we were always to carry with us a book that puts our minds again and again in the direction we want to go. Even if we were to read for only fifteen minutes a day in such a book, we would soon find our mind becoming less of a garbage can and more of a vase filled with good thoughts.”--Henri Nouwen from *Here and Now*

Week 2 Prayer Tool: Praying the Psalms

“...the Psalms are necessary. The consensus on this, throughout the church’s praying life, is impressive. If we wish to develop in the life of faith, to mature in our humanity, and to glorify God with our entire heart, mind, soul, and strength, the Psalms are necessary. We cannot bypass the Psalms. They are God’s gift to train us in prayer that is comprehensive and honest. The Psalms are necessary because they are the prayer masters.”--Eugene Peterson, *Answering God*

“The Psalter is the prayer book of Jesus Christ in the truest sense of the word. He prayed the Psalter and now it has become his prayer for all time...we understand how the Psalter can be prayer to God and yet God’s own Word, precisely because here we encounter the praying Christ...because those who pray the psalms are joining in with the prayer of Jesus Christ, their prayer reaches the ears of God. Christ has become their intercessor...”— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

A Variety of Types: (as classified by Hermann Gunkel)

I. Hymns

-Hymns in General Psalms 8; 19; 29; 33; 65; 67; 68; 96; 98; 100; 103; 104; 105; 111; 113; 114; 117; 135; 136; 139; 145-150.

-Songs of Zion Psalms 46; 48; 76; 84; 87; 122.

-Psalms of Yahweh's Enthronement Psalms 47; 93; 96:10-13; 97; 99.

II. Lament/Complaint Psalms

-Communal Complaint Psalms Psalms 44; 58; 60; 74; 79; 80; 83.

-Individual Laments in General Psalms 3; 5; 6; 7; 13; 17; 22; 25; 26; 27:7-14; 28; 31; 35; 38; 39; 42-43; 54-57; 59; 61; 63; 64; 69; 70; 71; 86; 88; 102; 109; 120; 130; 140; 141; 142; 143.

-Psalms of Confession Psalms 51; 130

-Psalms of Trust Psalms 4; 11; 16; 23; 27:1-6; 62; 131.

III. Royal Psalms Psalms 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 101; 110; 132; 144:1-11.

IV. Thanksgiving Psalms

-Thanksgivings of the Individual Psalms 18; 30; 32; 34; 40:2-12; 41; 66:1-7; 92; 116; 118; 138.

-Thanksgivings of the Community Psalms 66:8-12; 67; 124; 129.

Assignment for the Week--select at least one psalm to read as a prayer for each day. Reflect on how the words of the Psalm can be words for your prayers. Read them aloud. Imagine Jesus reciting these as his prayers. Do they connect with any circumstance in your life or that you see in the world around us?