

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Psalm 131 is part of a collection named the “Songs of Ascent”. Comprising of Psalms 120 - 134, pilgrim Jews traveling to the temple in Jerusalem would often sing these psalms as they travelled to the holy city. Psalm 131 embodies the spirit of surrender that can be found in what Richard Foster calls “simple prayer”: that in simple prayer, we pray what we’ve got. We lay down before the throne what is in us, and not what ought to be in us.

It is easy for us to shame ourselves for coming to prayer with a tangled mass of motives. They are, as Foster writes, “altruistic *and* selfish, merciful *and* hateful, loving *and* bitter.” Frankly, “this side of eternity we will *never* unravel the good from the bad, the pure from the impure.” But the good news is that God is “big enough to receive us with all our mixture”, and it is “in the very act of prayer itself—in the intimate, ongoing interaction with God—that these matters are cared for in due time.”

Psalm 131 models to us childlike and not childish prayer, where we come before the Lord with all that we are and all that we have. We do not lift our eyes too high, nor do we occupy ourselves with things that are beyond our means (v.1). Instead, we draw confidence and strength from the intimacy of abiding in the Father like a weaned child with their mother (v.2), who seeks nothing but the comforting presence of their parent.

There is contentment to be found in the humility and surrender that characterizes simple prayer. We would do well to start where we are, remembering that prayer is “nothing more than an ongoing and growing love relationship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

Go around and share with your group:

- What is a constant prayer that you had when you were young / when you had just started your faith journey?
- What is the silliest, most “out-of-context” ridiculous prayer that you’ve prayed to God?
- What is a constant prayer during this season of your life?

QUESTION TWO:

Foster has this to say about simple prayer: “Simple Prayer involves ordinary people bringing ordinary concerns to a loving and compassionate Father. There is no pretense in Simple Prayer. We do not pretend to be more holy, more pure, or more saintly than we actually are. We do not try to conceal our conflicting and contradictory motives from God—or ourselves. And in this posture we pour out our heart to the God who is greater than our heart and who knows all things (1 Jn. 3:20).”

How does this fit in with your ideas about prayer? How is it similar, and how is it different? How do you / would you put this into practice in your prayer life?

QUESTION THREE:

As we begin our journey of prayer to become a praying church, we want to leave space and time to be practicing with one another. When you engage in simple prayer with your group, start simply. Be conversational. Do not be discouraged by your lack of prayer. Do not attempt to pray “too hard”. Start where you are, and let things progress naturally—let the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit guide you. Have fun!