

***Prayer, Our Deepest Longing* by Ronald Rolheiser**

Discussion Guide

Chapter 1: Struggling in Prayer

1. Most days, we don't pray simply because we don't quite get around to it. What are some of the things that get in the way to finding time for daily prayer?
2. The Greek ideal of perfection is one of no deficiencies, no faults or flaws, therefore, never to sin. The Hebrew ideal is to simply walk with God, despite our flaws. How do we allow ourselves to move from setting a benchmark of personal perfection to embracing the Hebrew ideal of accepting our faults and letting God help us?
3. Our culture is a powerful narcotic which shields us from pursuing a deeper life. "We are attentive to so many things that we, ultimately, aren't attentive to anything. Have you found ways to minimize the dissonance and unplug from the world?"

Chapter 2: Hearing God's Voice in Prayer

1. The author suggests that we need to discern the cadence of God's voice. What are some of the ways you most clearly hear God's voice?
2. Concerning God and faith, what are your greatest fears?
3. What place does solitude have in your life?
4. "Nobody wants to live and die unnoticed, insignificant, unforgotten. We are always somewhat anxious about that. This anxiety is the opposite of faith. It is not so much fear that God doesn't exist, as fear that God does not notice our existence." (p.21)

Chapter 3: Understanding Priestly Prayer

1. How would you define the difference between devotional (or affective) prayer and liturgical (or priestly) prayer?
2. "Good liturgy is good psychology" (p.32) What is your usual experience of Sunday liturgy? How is this affected by what you bring to the Mass?
3. What does it mean to be a member of the body of Christ?
4. "Social morality is simply a reflection of private morality" (p.35) How have you seen that statement play out in our world?

Chapter 4: Practicing Affective Prayer

1. After his resurrection, Jesus asks Mary Magdalene "What are you looking for?" (p.38) How would you answer that question? What role does prayer play in your answer?
2. When you "turn your eyes toward heaven" (p.41), what do you see?
3. "Contemplative prayer is the answer to restlessness" (p.43) How did Thomas Merton find that to be the answer for himself? How might this statement change your life?

Chapter 5: Growing to Maturity in Prayer

1. How do you reconcile the prevailing desire of our culture-to have everything now-with the promises of a God "who asks us to live in a lifelong patience" (p.50)?

2. Which of the demons mentioned on pp.54-55 is most troubling to you at this point of your life? How can prayer affect the way you deal with this/these demons?
3. "Our world is not full of mediocre persons. It is full, rather, of extraordinarily gifted persons, living in mediocrity and in a subsequent frustration" (p.58). "There is a lot of anger in us as we get older" (56). How do you personally resolve these feelings in your own life and what part does or could prayer play in helping you?

Chapter 6: Listening to God's Heartbeat

1. "The ideal disciple is the one who is attuned to Christ's heartbeat" (p 65). What does being a disciple of Christ-a Christian-mean to you? How might being attuned to Christ's heartbeat change this?
2. Returning to the preface, Fr. Rolheiser notes: "We need to connect with God. We need prayer" (p viii). How has your study through these six sessions helped your prayer life? What are those suggestions you would still like to learn to do?
3. "You have to show up for prayer and you have to show up regularly" (p viii). Some in this group will have made that commitment and some will possibly be open to how to make that commitment. What has worked for you? What do you think could work for you?
4. What deep longing in your heart do you want to bring to God in prayer?

If you begin to feel anxious or to worry that you are not "doing it right," remember the words of a holy peasant who, when asked to share his secret to deep prayer, said simply, "***I just look at God, and I let God look at me.***" (p.69) Hopefully, this book and discussion will help you to be able to do just that.

This book was originally chosen to be part of the STM Library book discussion program prior to our COVID days. I couldn't help but feel that, in my own life, this experience of the past 6+ months has really opened my eyes and my heart to not only the power of prayer, but also the hopefulness and peace that comes with regular prayer. We are very lucky that in our parish, STM provided us many opportunities to keep our prayer life vital and real. Thank you!