

Experiencing God Through Prayer | Reflection Paper

By John Moran

As I began reading this book, the first chapter discusses the importance of praying without ceasing, as written in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. I felt challenged to learn to pray from the heart, not your head. To thirst for God, especially if you are feeling low and running on empty. The Lord commands us to come; you who are starving souls: go and be filled. I find that to be so interesting and what many people struggle with. Head knowledge versus the heart. It is vitally important to learn the foundational truths of the gospel. Still, by pouring out yourself to the Lord and waiting and listening to how he directs us or provides knowledge, I believe in asking the Lord for help to discern and provide wisdom when things get complicated. My middle daughter recently asked me the difference between being a Catholic and now a Christian who professes faith in Jesus Christ. Growing up a Catholic taught me head knowledge, but years later, I continue to try and grow towards praying with my heart.

Recently my Pastor began teaching the importance of stillness and experiencing a quiet meditation as part of a daily devotional. When I think about scriptural meditation, I can say confidently that this is an area of deficiency for me. When I felt I had succeeded in creating a healthy spiritual routine, i.e., reading scripture and praying almost daily for a year, I realized that my perspective was yet to be fully on point. In reading about scriptural meditation, I learned about different ways to read, pray, and meditate on the words.

The section where Jeanne Guyon discussed learning to pray the talk was enlightening. It reminded me of another church I attend on Friday evenings, International House of Prayer; They read and pray through worship those sections they just read; I struggle when I pray with being distracted by everyday life. Thoughts constantly get in the way of my reading and prayer times. I appreciated what Madame Guyon mentioned when she discussed it—settling into a peaceful spirit and being fully aware of God's presence. This is an opportunity area for me but one I desperately seek to improve upon.

Reading about transforming love was heartening for me. The chapter concludes by asking how easily the church would be changed if they would love. The chapter also references Psalm 45, 1:3 states, The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is wrought gold. Reflecting on what the chapter mentions, you must possess God's characteristics for love to be genuine and permanent. This caused me to reflect on the divide in our country. If we have God's love within, and it's maybe even overflowing, how are we so instantly filled with anger and hate for our brothers & sisters on the opposite side of the aisle? We are experiencing a great divide even in the church due to the enemy and his relentless attacks on the Church. We must let the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and God within us drive our thought process.

We all endure periods and seasons of varying degrees of suffering. As I read this chapter, I was reminded of a dear friend who, many years ago, said to me. John, it's 911 Jesus to many

people. She explained that people fall out of devotion to God because of their circumstances but dial 911 when something severe or tragic comes their way.

As the chapter explains, people may also turn to other means instead of the cross to help deal with whatever event they are dealing with. Madame Guyon mentions how Jesus chose to endure the cross and the excruciating ultimate suffering the cross brought to him. God wants us to abandon ourselves and trust Him, and He will get about good toward you and glory for Him. Pg. 50. This is another area where I need to lean more on God as my instinct and not the world.

I also agree with Guyon's advice: accept all His gifts, as some might be bitter or sweet but stay focused on Him. It's easy for many of us to resign ourselves and help elsewhere instead of immediately turning to him and giving our circumstances and ourselves to Him in sacrifice. That's what I want to continue to strive to do.

After reading Chapter 10, The Central Force, I was reminded of when I was 21 and accepted Christ into my heart. My entire thought process transformed in an instant. I'm not sure if everyone experiences the same process, but I desired to have God become the center of my daily life. I appreciated that Guyon mentioned that the more trusting and peaceful you are, the more quickly you will advance in your growth with God. I was an insatiable reader of the Bible and other books when I was first saved. I'm sure this is common for a lot of new believers. I must strive to reignite that same fire as part of my daily journey, never ceasing.

So far, this book outlines the importance of understanding how to communicate meaningfully with God. How can I learn to find more impactful ways to pray, meditate on the words, and discover a deeper relationship with God by experiencing stillness and silence until I can feel His presence engulfing me?