

Celebration of Discipline

Lesson 3.3. The Inward Disciplines (Meditation, Prayer, Fasting, Study)

Based on Calvin Miller, The Table of Inwardness, (Ch.1 pp. 18-22).

- A. Inside – A hunger for God. Ps 42: 1, 2
- B. Three Paradoxes
 - 1. The aloneness-is-presence paradox
 - a. The Christian who regularly meets alone with God is soon never alone. Is loneliness a problem in our world? Have you experienced it? It is a crippling disease of the spirit. It is growing in America. Why? Yet the Christian is never ever alone. Mt. 28:20; Mt 10:26-31. The Christian need never ever be lonely. Our aloneness becomes Solitude – we are with God.
 - 1. In the silence we meet God. In the silence we hear God. Ps 46:10. Miller writes, “Inner silence is easiest to achieve in a place of outer silence – the closet” (Mt. 6:6)
 - 2. In the silence we are at one with – God! With our Beloved Lord Jesus. Rev. 3:20. Have you opened the door and invited Him to eat at the table with you? When? Constantly!
 - b. Purity is essential – Mt. 5:8
 - 2. Retreat is advancement
 - a. We fight the feeling of not being busy and productive. But we meet God. Isa. 50:4
 - b. Once we meet God, He sends us in power and love with good news to tell all people we meet. Isa. 6:1-8
 - c. Abiding in Christ enables the Holy Spirit to truly produce His fruit in us and through us. Jn. 15:1-8; Gal. 5:22, 23
 - 3. Beyond is Within
 - a. The God-Creator of the universe chooses to live inside of us. As He takes over His transcendence fills our lives. Soon we are free from the cares of life. Mt 6:25-34
 - b. The Eternal fills up our lives – Ecc. 3:11
 - c. Suddenly God can begin to be seen as Big as He Is! Yahweh the I AM. El Shaddai. God the Almighty. Gen. 17:1, 2. How big is your God? Is He in a box? What box?
- C. Three Dangers
 - 1. Going inward has an addiction – might keep us from seeing the needs of the world around us. Mt. 25:31-46. Balance... Love God by loving our neighbor.
 - 2. Many will see this quest inward – as otherworldly – no earthly good. But again when we fully meet God, He sends us into the world to be the instruments of love and good news – Mt. 28:18-20; I Jn. 3:16-20
 - 3. The sweet Jesus syndrome. Jesus is not a good feeling. He is not a feeling at all. He is a personal being who calls us to Him because He is Lord. Lk. 6:46. He will not be used by us. He will not play games with us. He will not put up with our playing games with Him. When we come to things on His terms we have a glorious fellowship in His light, in His truth. I Jn. 1:5-10!

Closing Poem: Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Who am I? (on back)

Who Am I?

Who am I? They often tell me
I stepped from my cell's confinement
calmly, cheerfully, firmly,
like a squire from his country-house.

Who am I? They often tell me
I spoke to my warders
freely and friendly and clearly,
as though it were mine to command.

Who am I? They also tell me
I bore the days of misfortune
serenely, smilingly, proudly,
like one accustomed to win.

Am I then really that which other men tell of?
Or am I only what I myself know of myself?
Restless and longing and sick,
like a bird in a cage,
struggling for breath,
as though hands were compressing my throat,
starving for colours, for flowers, for the voices of birds,
thirsting for words of kindness, for neighbourliness,
trembling with anger at despotisms and petty humiliation,
tossing in expectation of great events,
powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,
weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,
faint, and ready to say farewell to it all?

Who am I? This or the other?
Am I one person today and tomorrow another?
Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,
and before myself a pitiful, whimpering weakling?
Or is something within me still like a beaten army,
fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?

Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.
Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am Thine.

--Dietrich Bonhoeffer