

Making Space for God

Opening Prayer-

O Lord, you have ordered this wonderful world and you know all things in earth and heaven: So fill our hearts with trust in you that by night and day, at all times and in all seasons, we may without fear commit all that we have and hope to be to your never-failing Love, for this life and the life to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

From The Book of Worship

Looking Back

Take some time to settle yourself. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you quiet your mind. Review your calendar and journal for the past two months.

- List the people, projects, and events that have occupied your time.
- What emotions colored your experiences?
- When did you sense that Jesus was present to you?
- When did he seem distant or you seem distant from him?
- Note any life lessons or themes that have surfaced for you in this time. Offer that up to Jesus.
- Rest or walk if you need to.

Prayer of Confession:

Almighty and most merciful Father,
We have wandered and strayed from your ways like lost sheep.
We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts.
We have offended against your holy laws.
We have left undone those things that we ought to have done;
and we have done those things that we ought not to have done;
and there is no health in us.
But you, O Lord, have mercy upon us in our need.
Spare those who confess their faults.
Restore those who are penitent,
according to your promises declared to mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord.
And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake,
that from this time we may live a disciplined, righteous and godly life,
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Scripture Study

Read Deuteronomy 8 three times in Lectio Divina style. Pay attention to your heart. If something catches your attention, stop and reflect on that section for awhile. If a verse or theme repeatedly catches your attention, consider making some type of memorial for yourself. (E.g. poem, painting, song, sculpture, etc.) What questions do you hear Jesus asking you? If you find yourself getting bored or restless, stay with the feeling and ask why. Remember, this day is not about you. It is about making yourself available to Him. Let him guide you. Reflective questions for the passage are found at the end of this handout.



Reading for Reflection

If you want to see God, then attain purity of heart: If you want an undivided heart then live a simple life—and that involves systematically eliminating whatever makes it unnecessarily complex. In other words, it involves renunciation. So long as we live fragmented existences any pursuit of contemplative experience is likely to be frustrated.

Michael Casey in Strangers to the City page 17

Attentiveness is acquired by most people through a habit of reflectiveness—learning to step back from experience to ponder its meaning. Most often meaning presents itself to a gently disengaged consciousness—fierce interrogation habitually yields nothing. As Archimedes discovered, insights often come at the most unlikely moments. Those who give a high priority to the pursuit of wisdom should, accordingly, try to structure their lives so that times of disengagement are multiplied.

Michael Casey in Strangers to the City page 30

In Nature and in my spiritual community I can usually remember that we have to dread things only one day at a time. Insight doesn't help here. Hope is not logical. It always comes as a surprise, just when you think all hope is lost. Hope is the cousin to grief, and both take time; you can't short circuit grief, or emptiness, and you can't patch it up with your bicycle tire tube kit. You have to take the next right action. Jesus would pray on the mountain, or hang out with the poor or the imprisoned...

Anne Lamott in Plan B, Further Thoughts on Faith, page 258

We learn the value of solitude by living. How God teaches us to enter into solitude is unique to each person. For some God uses the exuberating experience of success. For others he uses the wrenching experience of the cross to awaken them to the solitary dimensions of life. For most of us God makes use of both successes and crosses to bring us to the more qualitative aspects of growth in him.

Nemeck and Coombs in The Way of Spiritual Direction page 37

You are sent into a world full of tortured, twisted, overdriven souls:...How are you going to show these souls, who need it so dreadfully, the joy and delightfulness of God and surrender to God, unless you have it yourselves? But that means giving time, patience and effort to such a special discipline and cultivation of your attention as artists must give if they are to enter deeply into the reality and joy of natural loveliness and impart it in their work.

Evelyn Underhill, Concerning the Inner Life, Page 20

Who will deliver me from this body of death?

GOD -- thanks be to him -- through Christ Jesus Our Lord

Benediction

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen

Reflective Questions for Deuteronomy 8

1. What are the promises referred to in verse 1 that God had given to Israel?
2. Are there promises that you have received which time has made difficult to believe? What has your response been? Why?
3. What promises have you seen fulfilled over the course of time? Could these have been fulfilled any other way?
4. What are the Israelites called to remember about themselves? About God?

5. How can remembering encourage your heart and strengthen your faith?
6. It is clear that there is a great benefit to the testing God does with His people. How do you usually respond to His testing in and for you?
7. Is there something God is trying to get you to obey? What lessons might He be trying to teach?
8. Do you have a sense of what God might be training you for? What might that be?
9. What does God provide during the time of testing? During your testing, have you been aware of these things? Is there anything getting in the way of believing God and receiving these things?
10. Has there been anything else you felt like you needed, or was this enough? Why or why not?
11. One of God's provisions for his people was manna, which means "What is it." What in your life makes you say "What is it, what is it for, or why is this here?"
12. What does 'good land' look like to you? Is this different from what you thought it would be like? Why or why not?
13. What are the dangers of forgetting God or His promises?
14. As you take time to remember, is God bringing to your mind anything you have forgotten about His character or promises? As you remember, take time to praise Him for reminding you and worship Him for His faithfulness.