

Making Space for God

Opening Prayer

O Lord, make me childlike. Deliver me from the urge to compete with another for place or prestige or position. I would be simple and artless as a little child. Deliver me from pose and pretense. Forgive me for thinking of myself. Help me to forget myself and find my true peace in beholding Thee. That Thou mayest answer this prayer I humble myself before Thee. Lay upon me Thy easy yoke of self-forgetfulness that through it I may find rest. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

From the Pursuit of God by A. W. Tozlar



Saul's Rash Oath when Jonathan Eats Honey

Linoleum Block Print and Watercolor by Steven Stuckey 2013

Reflection- Looking Back

Take some times to settle yourself. Review your calendar and think back over where you have been this past month. Focus on answering this one question: **How has the Lord been present to you?** In the events of your life; in your joys and fears; in what has occupied your mind and heart; in what you dream about or long for; in what you are thankful for. Journal these thoughts and offer them to the Lord.

Scripture Study—1 Samuel 14:1-48- Saul's Rash Oath

Saul was anointed king by Samuel. Most were happy with the arrangement. The event that sealed the deal was initiated by Nahash the Ammonite. He threatened to gouge out the right eye of every man in the village of Jabesh Gilead. Saul heard the plan, called the nation together, and stopped Nahash dead in his tracks. Naysayers were silenced. Saul delivered. In chapter 12 Samuel gave his farewell speech including warnings and encouragement for what lay ahead for Saul and Israel. In chapter 13, Saul's son Jonathan initiates a bold skirmish with the much superior Philistines. That stirred up a hornet's nest of animosity with the Philistines. When Israel saw the enemy forces lined up against them, the troops melted and scattered. Saul, the military commander, decided he needed to do something immediately and whatever he did earned him a sharp rebuke from Samuel. Unfortunately the author fails to explain specifically what terrible thing Saul did, but he does create the impression that a bad seed had been planted in Saul's soul that will produce unpleasant fruit.

Reading for Reflection

Do not entertain the notion that you ought to advance in your prayer. If you do, you will only find you have put on the brake instead of the acceleration. All real progress in spiritual things comes gently, imperceptibly, and is the work of God. Our crude efforts spoil it. Know yourself for the childish, limited and dependent soul you are. Remember that the only growth which matters happens without our knowledge and that trying to stretch ourselves is both dangerous and silly. Think of the Infinite Goodness, never of your own state.

Evelyn Underhill

Church membership requirements, church doctrine, and church morality force almost all issues to an inner boiling point, where you are forced to face important issues at a much deeper level to survive as a Catholic or a

Christian. I think this is probably true of any religious community, if it is doing its job. Before the truth sets you free it tends to make you miserable.

Richard Rohr in Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life page 74

As many others have said in different ways, we all seem to suffer from a tragic case of mistaken identity. Life is a matter of becoming fully and consciously who we already are, but it is a self that we largely do not know. It is as though we are all suffering from a giant case of amnesia. As mentioned before, the protagonist in so many fairy tales are already nobles, royal daughters and sons of the king or even the gods. But their identity is hidden from them, and the story line pivots around this discovery.

Richard Rohr in Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life page 97

The authors of the Bible attempt to show God's purpose through historical events, but a purpose deeply complicated by human disorder, freedom, and finiteness. In this sense, the biblical writers tell the human story through particular cases and characters. What is it like to be a human with a divided consciousness—intermittently loving your brother but hating him even more; resentful or perhaps contemptuous of your father but also capable of the deepest filial regard; stumbling between disastrous ignorance and imperfect knowledge; fiercely asserting your own independence but caught in an inwardly unstable vortex of greed, ambition, jealousy, lust, piety, courage, compassion, and much more? Fiction fundamentally serves the biblical writers as an instrument of fine insight into these abiding perplexities of man's creaturely condition.

Robert Alter in The Art of Biblical Narrative Page 176

Many of us associate God with cranky nuns with hands on hips or stern preachers with pursed lips nearly bursting with fury because we were chewing gum in church. We see God as a stern and controlling parent who was watching with simmering rage from the window when we were experiencing the thrill of our first kiss in a car in the driveway. Or we see God as a terrifying judge who has been counting our life's infractions and will inevitably charge us, mercilessly judge us, and eternally punish us for our guilt. But the scandalous truth, known by mystics throughout history and affirmed in the pages of our sacred texts, is that when we connect with God, it is as if we are plugging our souls into a pure current of high-voltage joy....When we tap into the pure joy that burns like a billion galaxies in the heart of God, we'll soon find ourselves shouting, dancing, singing, leaping, clapping, swaying, laughing, and otherwise jubilating and celebrating.

Brian McLaren – Naked Spirituality

The Benediction

Forgive me, most gracious lord and Father, if this day I have done or said anything to increase the pain of the world. Pardon the unkind word, the impatient gesture, the hard and selfish deed, the failure to show sympathy and kindly help where I have had the opportunity, but missed it; and enable me so to live that I may daily do something to lessen the tide of human sorrow, and add to the sum of human happiness.

F.B. Meyer (England 1847-1929)

Reflection Questions for 1 Samuel 14:1-48

1. What discernment process does Jonathan use to determine whether to attack the Philistine outpost at Mikmash?
2. Describe Jonathan and contrast him to his father Saul in this passage.
3. Israel routs the Philistines. Identify the factors that contributed to their success.
4. How does Saul motivate his soldiers in this passage? (See also 1 Samuel 11:7) How do you motivate others?
5. What was Saul's goal in binding his soldiers under an oath? In what ways was it a rash oath? See Judges 11:31-40, Matthew 5:33
6. How does Saul interact with the Lord and seek his will?
7. Contrast Jonathan and Saul and their relationship with the troops.
8. What do you learn about the process of discernment from this passage?