

Making Space for God

Elemental Spirituality—Loyalty

Opening Prayer of Confession

Lord, look upon me, see my misery. To whom should I flee, if not to You? How could I tolerate myself, but for the thought that You can tolerate me, but for the knowledge that you are still my friend? Look upon my misery. Look upon Your servant who is lazy, headstrong, and superficial. Look upon the meanness of my heart, which offers You only as much as is absolutely necessary and will not be generous in loving You. Look upon my prayers: see how sullenly and reluctantly I fulfill this duty and how cheerfully, for the most part, my heart turns from talking with You to other things. Look upon my work: it is barely satisfactory, extorted from me by the pressure of daily life, rarely prompted by true love of You. Listen to my words: the words of selfless kindness and love are rare. Look upon me, O God: You will see no great sinner, only a small one; one whose very sins are small, mean, and commonplace, whose will and heart, mind and strength are mediocre in every respect, even in wickedness. Look and have mercy, my Lord.



Karl Rahner (1904-1984)

Arrival

Take five minutes to settle yourself by breathing deeply. Inhale for the count of five through your nose and as you do so pray silently, “I belong to Jesus.” Exhale through your mouth for the count of ten and as you do so pray silently “Body and Soul, in this life and the next.” Once you feel relaxed invite the Lord to guide and direct your thoughts for the day. Think back over where you have been in the last eight weeks. What burdens, emotions, and concerns do you carry? What are you thankful for? Offer these to the Lord.

The Book of Ruth—Purple People

In 1971 InterVarsity published its first pictorial national staff directory. It featured a photo of each of the 106 paid staff members and their families. The booklet was meant to be a donor prayer guide but staff called it the Purple People Book because the cover was printed on purple cardstock.

If a young staff recruit were to look at the booklet today, I suspect they would not recognize a name or face in the entire book. Many of those pictured from 1971 have since gone home to be with Jesus. Some had successful lifelong careers in ministry. A few experienced seasons of unspeakable sorrow. A few lost their faith. The vast majority, however, lived lives of faithful anonymity. They were engaged in student ministry for a season but then went on to serve in their local church, support their families, and try to love their neighbors in the name of Jesus.

Within InterVarsity we aspire to help students become world changers. We read of Moses, Elijah, David, and Paul who lived big heroic lives and we want to be like them. But more often than not, courage gets lived out in small, quiet ways by ordinary people. Such was the case with Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz, three individuals trying to survive in the backwoods of Palestine thousands of years ago. All three would have been shocked to discover

that their little story was considered important enough to be written down. But their story is important because it reveals to us our God who sees all, including the small and seemingly insignificant. In His book of purple people, no one is anonymous, no one is forgotten, everyone has a name, everyone is loved and remembered.¹

Scripture Reading—The Book of Ruth

Read through the book of Ruth in one sitting. It will take you fifteen minutes. Pay attention to what stirs in your heart as you read this little story of love, loyalty, and survival. Journal your impressions.

Reading for Reflection

But God our Creator guides and acts upon us from within our own being. We draw near to God as we submit to the sway of an inner magnet, the heart's heart, the deep center. The God-ward journey is a movement of centering, of integration, which happens partly by itself, partly through our conscious consent.

From the River Within by Christopher Bryant pg 151

To honestly confront myself is a difficult challenge and not easy for anyone. In practice, a man or woman is asked to be in a very healthy way suspicious and distrustful of every aspect of the motivation behind their actions, to be willing to explore and reorient this motivation.

Thomas Green in The Friend of the Bridegroom, page 15

Saints can be as narrow and cranky as the rest of us. The difference between us and them is that they are fully aware of their own fragility; we judge ourselves to be sturdier than we are.

Michael Casey in Living in the Truth, page 182

The belief has grown in me that Christ did not come to found an organized religion but came instead to found an unorganized one. He seems to have come to carry religion out of the temples into the fields and sheep pastures, onto the roadsides and the banks of rivers, into the houses of sinners and publicans, into the town and the wilderness, toward the membership of all that is here. Well you can read and see what you think.

Wendell Berry in Jayber Crow Page 321

I can imagine that if there existed a God who loved, the devil would be driven to destroy even the weakest, the most faulty imitation of that love. Wouldn't he be afraid that the habit of love might grow, and wouldn't he try to trap us all into being traitors, into helping him extinguish love? If there was a God who uses us and makes his saints out of such material as we are, the devil too may have his ambitions; he may dream of training even such a person as myself, into being his saints, ready with borrowed fanaticism to destroy love wherever we find it.

Graham Greene in The End of the Affair

"Meaning is not a luxury for us, it is a kind of spiritual oxygen, we might say, that enables our souls to live."

Dallas Willard – The Divine Conspiracy

Benediction

My brothers and sisters, let us close on a quiet note, so that God's gentle yet powerful word of grace within us is not drowned by our loud and weak human words. Let us pray: "Lord, help my unbelief," give me the grace of faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, in his gospel and his saving power. Amen

¹Reflection and Painting by Steven Stuckey 2018