

SANCTUARY OF THE SOUL

Stepping into Meditative Prayer – Part 1



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Based on the book:

*Sanctuary of the Soul: Journey into
Meditative Prayer by Richard Foster,
InterVarsity Press, 2011.*



Opening Prayer Not at our beck and call

- ❖ "Not at our beck and call", from: Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth, Walter Brueggemann



Learning to Be Present

- ❖ Practice of Christian meditation no longer part of our cultural ethos
- ❖ Man-on-the-street will say that meditation is defined as emptying one's mind
- ❖ Christian meditation does practice a form of emptying
 - ❖ It is the practice of discarding in our lives all that is in opposition to Christ
 - ❖ Paired with filling our lives with the Spirit of Christ

First Step of Meditation

- ❖ Recollection or becoming wholly present is first step
- ❖ *In Recollection...Christian contemplatives set before their minds one of the names or attributes of God, a fragment of Scripture, an incident of the life of Christ; and allow—indeed encourage—this consideration and the ideas and feelings which flow from it, to occupy the whole mental field.*
Evelyn Underhill
- ❖ Practice of recollection is difficult for Christians today

Distraction

- ❖ We will likely encounter our own distractedness first
- ❖ *The first quarter of an hour thus spent in attempted meditation will be, indeed, a time of warfare; which should at least convince you how unruly, how ill-educated is your attention, how miserably ineffective your will, how far away you are from the captaincy of your own soul.* Evelyn Underhill
- ❖ Romano Guardini says that spending our entire meditation dealing with our distractedness is time well-spent



Beginning Meditation

- ❖ Find a comfortable spot for meditation
- ❖ As you become aware of any tension or anxiety, let it go
- ❖ Using your imagination, remind yourself that God is present with you
- ❖ Release any worries or distractions into the hands of our Father
 - ❖ Called “active surrendering”

Desirable Effects of this Practice

- ❖ In the presence of God, we discover that it is totally safe to let go of our fears, frustrations, distractions, anger, griefs
- ❖ *We surrender control over our life and our destiny. In an act of deliberate intentions we decide to do things God's way and not our way. (p. 62)*
- ❖ We begin the process of living out Gal 2:19-20
- ❖ We experience the truth of 1 Peter 5:7
 - ❖ *We are enabled to give up the need to watch out for number one because we have One who is watching out for us. (p. 63)*
- ❖ Foster suggests we think of wrapping each worry or concern as a gift we present to God
 - ❖ They (our worries) are no longer ours as no one would ask for the return of a gift

Second Step of Recollection

- ❖ A growing desire to confess and repent of our sins
- ❖ We will find ourselves at the foot of the cross where we can hear Christ's word of forgiveness for our sins
- ❖ Our confession is for our own benefit; God is already aware of all our sin
- ❖ Our confession is part of the transformation of our heart
- ❖ *Confession has to do with the facing and naming before God the darkness within us; it is also concerned with facing and naming before God the light within as it breaks forth with ever-increasing brilliance. Without a preparatory time of confession no real silence is possible.* Gordon Cosby

Third Step of Recollection

- ❖ We come to terms with the way that God works in the lives of human beings
- ❖ God's ways are different from ours Is 55:8-11
- ❖ *God's ways are all patience and love, all grace and mercy. Our ways are all domination and control, all manipulation and guile. (p. 67)*
- ❖ Think of this acceptance of God's ways as entering "the rhythm of the Spirit" instead of resignation to God's will
- ❖ We will discover that God's commandments are the best way to live Deut 6:24

Preview of Next Week

- ❖ “Beholding the Lord” as the second step of meditative prayer
- ❖ *Beholding the Lord speaks of an inward steady gaze of the heart upon God, the divine Center. We bask in the warmth of God’s presence. We soak in God’s love and care. The soul, ushered into the Holy Place, is transfixed by what she sees. (p. 69)*

Meditation on the Names of God

- ❖ Survey the names of God on the handout and find one that tugs at your heart
- ❖ Take time to read the brief description and Bible passage
- ❖ We will spend the next 5 – 10 minutes in quiet meditation