

The Life You've Always Wanted (But Need Spiritual Disciplines to Obtain) #8 Reflecting on Scripture

Introduction

We want to arrange our lives for the purpose spiritual transformation. (II Cor. 3:18) We have been training ourselves with a series of purposeful activities (spiritual disciplines). Transformation is the goal.

And we know that we are transformed by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:1-2). The analogy given in Eph. 5:25 can help. We need to be "washed by His word." Being focused on His word will lead to the life we have always wanted, a life prepared for good works. (See II Tim 3:16-17).

Focused on His Word

Generally, that pursuit calls for a solid, intentional, maybe even scholarly study of the Bible. It implies a need to dig deep and get the "real" meaning of the words; understand the context and cultural circumstances; be able to visualize the location of the teaching and get a handle on the meaning.

But remember, the Bible is not just a book to be analyzed, scrutinized and discussed. Knowledge by itself does not lead to transformation. The written word is the living word. We have to internalize those truths. We have to let those "facts" impact our lives.

The scriptures are a love story or a love letter written to God's kids. We must approach that letter not as something to be mastered, but a message to be used to develop a sweeter, more meaningful relationship with our Savior.

Lectio Divina

The practice of reflecting on the scriptures: devotional reading. spiritual reading
It is the practice of listening to God's Word relationally, not just cognitively.

Rooted in the monastic tradition of the 3rd and 4th centuries, Lectio Divina is a way to approach God's Word. It can be a very helpful tool or spiritual discipline as we allow God to train us.

Preparation

- A. Invite the Holy Spirit to be your teacher. Jesus promised us "the Counselor." (Consider John 14:25-26)

Our response: "Speak for your servant is listening." (I Sam. 3:10)

- B. Choose a peaceful place. Quiet your mind (deal with Henri Nouwen's "monkeys").
- C. Have a repentant heart. Deal with sin. Consider Ps. 66:18

#1. Lectio: Read

- A. Read the passage. Read it slowly. Reread it at least three times. Perhaps read it out loud (or have it read to you). Maybe read it in various translations.
- B. Listen.
Listen with your heart. Control the distractions. Take your time.

Remember, what the mind repeats, it retains.

I HEAR.

#2 Meditatio: Reflect

"Chew on it." Mull it over. Ruminates on the Word. Remember, the text is to be received, not dissected. But think it through.

The concept of meditation is mentioned over 50 times in the OT. It is a slow, thoughtful, sustained interest in what God has to say.

Consider: Ps. 16:7, 48:9, 64:9, 77:12, 143:5 and 119:18

Ask yourself questions like: What is being emphasized? How do I feel about what is being said? What is resonating in my heart? What aspect of my heart is being touched? What am I reacting to?

This is a personal, not an academic reaction to what the Word is saying.

I SEE. I GET IT.

#3. Oratio: Pray

Talk to God about what you are hearing and what you are receiving from His Spirit. Imagine a REAL conversation centered on what you heard from His Word.

Teach me your way, O Lord: Ps. 86:11

LET'S TALK IT THROUGH

#4 Contemplatio: Contemplate

This is different than meditation. It is a “wordless, quiet rest in the presence of God.” We allow ourselves to be absorbed by the Word. It is a time to fix our gaze HIM. A time to “chill” and just be with Him.

I AM WAITING ON YOU.

#5 Get Ready to Respond

Put what you heard into practice. Consider Phil. 4:9

Answer the questions:

What difference will this passage make in my life, TODAY?

What should I obey? What should I start/stop/change?

What should I memorize?

What should I journal about?

SO What?

Depending on what’s going on in your life, here are some examples in scripture to focus on:

The power of God’s Word in our lives:

Heb. 4:12-13 or II Tim. 3:16-17

Comfort is needed:

Jer. 31:10-13 or II Cor. 1:3-7

Someone has hurt you:

Gen. 50:15-20 or Col. 3:12-14

You need to control your tongue:

Prov. 10:18-20 or James 3:1-12

Dealing with anger:

Ps. 4:4 or James 1:19-21

Strength is needed:

Isa. 40:29-31 or Ps. 73:25-26

Discussion Questions:

1. Is this approach to reading/studying God's Word new for you? Do you think it might be a blessing? If this is a well-established practice in your life, share your experience with your group.
2. Talk about how this approach is different from a "normal" Bible Study. What are some "dangers" when someone merely reads the Bible to accumulate knowledge?
3. Consider taking a passage (Ps. 119:105) while you are together and utilize this approach. What did you observe? What did you learn?

Sherry Worel
sworel@stoneybrooke.com