

Refresh Your Soul

The Deeper Devotion e-letter

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Fully Present to Jesus

Part 2 of Choosing Stillness

It shouldn't have come as a surprise. Last week I set out on a fresh path of commitment in my daily times with God and, on the very first day, I struggled to concentrate. With some effort I managed to still my soul, and that ushered in an utterly valuable week. At the heart of the matter was making a choice to be fully present to Jesus. Here's a glance at what made the difference.



Value Jesus' presence. As I tried to gather my distracted self to be present with Jesus, I thought about how easy this would be if he was sitting physically next to me. As my guest I would not hesitate to offer him the hospitality of my undivided attention. Yet I do believe that Jesus is truly present with me. Realizing that, I chose to give him that gift, and deep conversation ensued. I'm learning to ask myself *Will I receive Jesus as my guest and offer him the gift of my full attention?*



Choose to be present in the now. My distractions often revolve around re-working the past or being busy with the future. In doing this I risk missing out on the moment which is the only piece of life I'm given to live. I wonder what I think I will accomplish by doing this. If I'm traveling will rushing to the front of the train get me to my destination any faster? My time is better invested staying in my seat and engaging in what's before me. It's the same when I come to meet with God. *Will I engage fully in this time together, believing that God has something for me right now that I do not want to miss?*



Realize that the world will not falter while I'm not busy with it.* This piece of advice helps me to keep my sense of my own importance in check. If becoming silent brings up a compulsion to fill up the space with activity or to rush away to another commitment, I want to understand why that is. *Am I willing to allow myself to be 'useless' for a few minutes in God's presence with the knowledge that wasting time with God is always good and right?* Since God is willing to make himself available to me, it shouldn't be so hard to become unavailable to others for a time in order to give priority to him. The world can certainly wait and, if I let it, I return to it with more to offer.

If you would like to grow in this area, I suggest considering for yourself questions like those I've mentioned. Then plan to talk them over with a soul friend, a mentor or spiritual director. An intentional conversation can help to clarify our intentions and the things that hinder us, and move us forward in life with God.

*from Anthony Bloom's profound little book *Beginning to Pray/De Weg Naar Binnen*

Available for you,
(but not always)

Elizabeth

www.deeper-devotion.net

Really Thirsty Indeed

A Biblical reflection from my *Holy Land Tour*

My spring visit to Israel continues to breathe life into my reading of the Bible. Last week, for instance, this phrase popped off the page of Psalm 63: *A psalm of David when he was in the Wilderness of Judah.* (NLT) I'll explain.

The first time I set eyes on the Wilderness, I was amazed at its barrenness. Hard limestone stretched out before me, steep cliffs laid out under the beating sun. So *this* is where Jesus endured 40 days of fasting and temptation!

We spent Day 12 of our trip in the Wilderness. A visit to Masada ended with a walk down the 450 meter high fortress in 43°C heat. We lunched at En-Gedi, an oasis of waterfalls and pools. But it was Pentecost and it seemed most of Israel was there seeking refreshment. There wasn't a piece of shade to spare, the pools were filled to the brim with splashing families, and we just got hotter.

Our third stop was Qumran where an expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls shared his wisdom, oblivious to the group wilting before him. Half way through, my body pretty much gave in. In one last effort to stay present I filled my water bottle and poured it over my head. Parched and overheated, it helped but a little.

David declared in Psalm 63 *My soul thirsts for you; my whole body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water.* David knew thirst! And he knew how to quench it. *You satisfy me more than the richest feast. I will praise you with songs of joy.*

The Lord who so longs to satisfy can't do it if we don't come to him. He gives us thirst, yet will we realize what it is we're thirsting for? My thirst for God, freshly realized, is drawing me to him each day. And as I come he shows me anew how delighted he is to quench it.

