

“...In his presence our inner life will be transformed, and we will become the kind of people for whom his course of action is...natural”

Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 273

Lent - Becoming like Jesus

Christ's transformation of us is not a long-distance relationship. This is not an online class! In order to learn to do what he says, it takes proximity to Him as his full-time student. It's more like boarding school!

Scripture:

Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. John 15:4-11

Voice of wisdom:

“Who teaches you? Whose disciple are you? Honestly.

“One thing is sure: You are somebody's disciple. You learned how to live from somebody else. There are no exceptions to this rule, for human beings are just the kind of creatures that have to learn and keep learning from others how to live. Aristotle remarked that we owe more to our teachers than to our parents, for though our parents gave us life, our teachers taught us the good life....

“The assumption of Jesus' program for his people on earth was that they would live their lives as his students and co-laborers. They would find him so admirable in every respect- wise, beautiful, powerful, and good - that they would constantly seek to be in his presence and be guided, instructed, and helped by him in every aspect of their lives....On that assumption, his promise to his people was that he would be with them every moment, until this particular 'age' is over and the universe enters a new phase (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5-6). More generally, the *provisions he made* for his people during this period in which we now live are provisions made for those who are, precisely, apprentices to him in kingdom living. Anyone who is not a continual student of Jesus, and who nevertheless reads the great promises of the Bible as if they were for him or her, is like someone trying to cash a check on another person's account. At best, it succeeds only sporadically.

“The effect of such continuous study under Jesus would naturally be that we learn how to do everything we do 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' (Col. 3:17); that is, on his behalf or in his place; that is, once again, as if he himself were doing it....In his presence our inner life will be transformed, and we will become the kind of people for whom his course of action is the natural (and supernatural) course of action.”

Dallas Willard in *The Divine Conspiracy*, pgs. 271, 273.

Study 12

Contemplation:

What key words and ideas stand out to you? How do they help you take a deeper look at yourself as a disciple (or student) of Jesus?

Think about the relationship between abiding, loving, and obeying. How do they each play out in your life?

Do you truly, deep down, believe that apart from Jesus “you can do nothing”? It can be easier to give mental assent to this than to live according to it.

What would it look like for you to start growing as a “continual student” of Jesus?

Practices:

Write down one or two of the key phrases that are important to you. Hold them (literally) before God and wait silently on him. Record any further thoughts he may give you.

Jesus is indeed “wise, beautiful, powerful, and good.” There is no one more worthy of our discipleship. Spend some time this week in prayer of adoration. Your prayer may flow out of time spent in God’s wondrous creation, or from a Scripture passage such as Romans 11: 33-36: *O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him, to receive a gift in return? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.*

Willard encourages us to do everything “as if (Jesus) himself were doing it.” This is a little different than the WWJD of past popularity. Try to think more in terms of, “If Jesus were me, with my exact life, what would he be doing in this situation?” rather than “If I were Jesus, what should I do?” Then remember to pause and listen to the Holy Spirit, one of Jesus’ “provisions” for us today.

©sharonracke These contemplative studies are the result of the thoughtful and transformative teaching I have received both at The Dwelling Place (dwellingplaceindy.org), and as a student of The Renovare Institute (renovare.org). I pray that as you use them, you will experience the presence and love of God, and learn more about living with Christ daily. Sharon Racke (recess.racke@gmail.com)