

“The purpose of the Disciplines is liberation from the stifling slavery to self-interest and fear.”

Richard Foster in *Celebration of Discipline*, pg. 2

Ordinary time - Spiritual disciplines, continued

Before we delve into some specific spiritual disciplines in the next weeks, we are going to look at some wise words from Richard Foster about practicing these disciplines.

Scripture: Psalm 42:1-5, from The Message

A white-tailed deer drinks from
the creek; I want to drink God,
deep draughts of God.
I'm thirsty for God-alive.
I wonder, "Will I ever make it -
arrive and drink in God's
presence?"
I'm on a diet of tears—
tears for breakfast, tears for
supper.
All day long

people knock at my door,
Pestering, "Where is this God
of yours?"

These are the things I go over
and over, emptying out the
pockets of my life.
I was always at the head of the
worshiping crowd, right out in
front,
Leading them all,

eager to arrive and worship,
Shouting praises, singing
thanksgiving—
celebrating, all of us, God's
feast! Why are you down in the
dumps, dear soul?
Why are you crying the blues?
Fix my eyes on God—
soon I'll be praising again.
He puts a smile on my face.
He's my God.

Voice of wisdom:

*Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people. The classical Disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths. They invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm.

*We must not be led to believe that the Disciplines are only for spiritual giants and hence beyond our reach, or only for contemplatives who devote all their time to prayer and meditation. Far from it. God intends the Disciplines...to be for ordinary human beings. In fact, the disciplines are best exercised in the midst of our relationships....

*Joy is the keynote of all the Disciplines. The purpose of the Disciplines is liberation from the stifling slavery to self-interest and fear.

*...to know the mechanics does not mean that we are practicing the Disciplines. The Spiritual Disciplines are an inward and spiritual reality, and the inner attitude of the heart is far more crucial than the mechanics....We have only one thing to do, namely, to experience a life of relationship and intimacy with God....”

*The Spiritual Disciplines are intended for our good. They are meant to bring the abundance of God into our lives. It is possible, however, to turn them into another set of soul-killing laws. Law-bound Disciplines breathe death....It is easy in our zeal for the Spiritual Disciplines to turn them into the external righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees.

Richard Foster in *Celebration of Discipline*, Chapter One

Study 36

Contemplation:

What key words and ideas stand out to you? How do they help you take a deeper look at practicing spiritual disciplines?

The Psalmist talks about fixing his eyes on God. What role do you think the spiritual disciplines (meditation, prayer, fasting, silence and solitude, etc.) have in helping you do this? Do you believe God can bring a smile to your face through spiritual disciplines?

How might a Discipline become “law-bound” in your life?

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.

The Scripture this week is from Psalm 42 in *The Message*. In the coming days, return to that psalm in its entirety and perhaps in some additional versions. Spend time contemplating how these verses reflect aspects of your own life.

Use the psalm as a prayer on occasion, or write your own prayer based on it.

©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)