

## Contemplatives: Loving God Through Adoration

### Who Are We?

- I feel closest to God when my emotions are awakened, when God quietly touches my heart, tells me that he loves me, and makes me feel like I'm his closest friend. I would rather be alone with God contemplating his love than participating in a formal liturgy or being distracted by a walk outside.
- The most difficult times in my faith are when I can't feel God's presence within me.
- The words lover, intimacy, and heart are very appealing to me.
- I really enjoy having thirty minutes of uninterrupted time each day to sit in quiet prayer and "hold hands" with God, writing love letters to him and enjoying his presence.

### Scriptural Examples of Contemplatives in the Bible

- Deuteronomy 33: 12; Psalm 63: 1, 3, 5-5, 8

### What Are Our Pitfalls?

- LOSING BALANCE: Beware that your love for God is precluding enjoying the company of others or something God has made.
- CREATING A VACUUM: Be cautious of practices that speak of emptying yourself and creating a vacuum. A Christian wants to be filled with the Holy Spirit, not emptied out.

### Suggestions for the Road:

#### THE JESUS PRAYER:

- Through history, contemplatives made great use of the "Jesus Prayer," that goes like this: "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."
- The purpose of the Jesus Prayer is to practice the presence of God.
- When you are anxious, frightened, uptight, spiritually dry, or being tempted, the Jesus prayer calls you to a humble reliance on God.

#### SECRET ACTS OF DEVOTION:

- A secret act of devotion is something you do – giving an anonymous gift, helping out someone "behind the scenes," sending a card – without letting anyone, even the person who benefits, know you had anything to do with it.
- The importance of secrecy is that it ensures that you are doing it for the love of God – only.
- Examples include: Anonymous gift of cash to someone in need Poem written to God, then burned Song sung only in the presence of God Intensive, intercessory prayer with fasting A symbol of your love for God, which you carry in your pocket or wear as a necklace or ring

#### CENTERING PRAYER:

- Choose a word [i.e. Jesus or Father, etc.] as a focus for contemplative prayer. Repeat the word silently in your mind for a set amount of time [say, 15 minutes].
- Fill you mind with thoughts of Jesus, or love, joy, or peace.
- The goal is not to create a spiritual experience, but to simply rest in and enjoy the presence of God.

#### STATIONS OF THE CROSS:

- Simply read through the events of Christ's crucifixion, i.e. death sentence given to Jesus, Gethsemane, women mourning for Jesus, being stripped, beaten, mocked, nailed, Jesus speaking to John about Mary, dying, removed from cross, laid in tomb.
- At each point pause and picture the truth of Scripture this episode highlights.

# Intellectuals: Loving God with the Mind

## Who Are We?

- When intellectual's minds are awakened, when they understand something new about God or his ways with his children, then their adoration is unleashed.
- If they are not learning new things about God their relationship with Him feels stagnant. Intellectual pursuit has played a key role in advancing God's work.
- The early church was so successful in its witness to the pagan world not only because they outlived and out- died the world, but they out-thought it. See: Psalm 49:1-4; Proverbs 1:5-7
- Right thinking – conforming our thoughts to the thoughts of God – enables right living.
- A vast majority of the difficulties Christians experience in life is caused because we don't understand the Scriptures well enough.

## Scriptural Examples of Intellect in the Bible

- 1 King 4: 33-34; Psalm 49: 1-4; Proverbs 1: 5-7

## What Are Our Pitfalls?

### LOVING CONTROVERSY:

- See: 1 Timothy 1:4, 6:4-5; 2 Timothy 2:23-25
- Discussions aimed at defeating rather than caring for the welfare of the other person is not godly.

### KNOWING RATHER THAN DOING:

- Knowing what is right is not a substitute for doing what is right. According to the book of Proverbs, the truly wise person is someone who actively applies the ways of righteousness which they have studied.
- BEING PROUD:
- Pride is a common failing among intellectuals. It is demonstrated by the common desire to correct virtually everyone.

## Suggestions for the Road:

- Consider getting a MA from a seminary after undergrad studies. Many seminaries offer one-week courses during the summer – this could set your study agenda for the entire year following.
- Think how much stronger you'd be as a Christian if you picked one topic a year for in-depth study. Many courses are available through audio or video formats.
- What are the five basic building blocks for a Christian mind? - church history, biblical studies, systematic theology, ethics, and apologetics.

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