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PMN 346: Personal Spiritual Formation

Spiritual Direction in The Episcopal Church

What is present in you?

Worship and praise are present in me. There is endless reason to worship God, but at the heart of the matter lies the truth; worshipping God is the supreme purpose for which humans were created. Ascribe to the Lord, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. (Psalm 29:1-2) The created of the church is to glorify and worship God through Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:4-6, 1 Peter 2:5)

To worship is to recognize, honor, and express the worthiness of God that He is due as our Maker Acts 17:28 and our Redeemer. (Colossians 1:12-13) Worship is part of our daily fellowship with God. For believers, worship is our way of life,

The Apostle Paul defined worship as an all- encompassing lifestyle, dedicated to glorifying God:” Therefore, I urge you, brothers, and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God-this is your true and proper worship. (Romans12:1 NIV)

When we praise God, we are telling Him and others how wonderful He is, how awesome He is. We acknowledge His authority, power, goodness, mercy and just all the other wonderful things about who and what God is. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. (Psalm 100:4) Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. (Psalm 150:6)

What did you learn?

Spiritual Direction is a spiritual discipline which has a source of nurture for Christians for centuries. It is a form of soul care which offers an individual the opportunity to meet with another

Christian for the purpose of examining his/her relationship with God. A director is not an advisor but more of a facilitator helping the directee pay attention to what God (the true Director) is doing in his/her life.

Directees who benefit most are those who desire more of God, who want a deeper relationship with Him, a keener sense of His presence.

In spiritual direction with ancient roots, a person offers intentional, experienced spiral companionship to another, or a group of others. Spiritual directors provide confidential, trustworthy spaces in which people may explore their doubts, longings, and faith experiences. In a Christian context, spiritual directors may offer guidance in prayer, spiritual practices, and baptismal discipleship in the world.

Spiritual direction is about growth in relationship to God rather than resolving problems. Despite the title, a spiritual director is less likely to “direct” than to listen, as questions, reflect, suggest, and share resources. In particular, the director and directee listen together for the ways God’s Spirit might be leading the directee.

In the Episcopal Church, a spiritual direction is a purposeful, disciplined relationship between two (sometimes more) Christians. It aims to help one or both participants identify and cultivate practices that link their individual lives to God. Spiritual direction could be thought of as the next step after evangelism. That is, once a soul enjoys an experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ that soul must pursue spiritual growth. A previously worldly soul must become holy. Spiritual direction assists a soul in pursuing holiness.

Each Requires Honest, Courageous Self-Disclosure

Self-protection makes for second-rate art. Self-deception is self-protection’s spiritual equivalent, and it cancels spiritual growth utterly. Self-protection in art keeps the would-be artist cautious and imitative. Self-deception while attempting spiritual growth inclines the soul to pat answers and shallow understanding of the human condition. Spiritual directors can keep us honest-or try to. A wise

director can spot the difference between mere earnestness and actual honesty and knows that legalism serves our fear of the abyss more than our love for God.

Each Requires Submission to Tutelage

Few artists advance without submitting their work to the critical scrutiny of superior artists. This is agonizing but necessary. The growing artist needs to be able to view her own work objectively as though it were the work of another. Likewise, the soul attempting spiritual growth must embrace her own ordinariness before her uniqueness can hope to emerge. These are spiritual directors who know God's way and the "devices and desires of our hearts" better than we do. We get "honest to God" faster in their company. It assists our spiritual growth to have another view it with us objectively. A spiritual director knows as much as an art teacher would know about different approaches to, say pigmentation.

How would you approach the disciplines moving forward?

Spiritual leadership is the influence that grows the life of a leader being transformed by the power of God's Spirit. Spirit leadership is learning to robustly practice spiritual disciplines that deepen the roots of leaders in the love of God. Effective Spiritual leaders learn to experience the depths of God's love, so they know how to lead others into the same depths. Such leadership bears the fruit of transformed lives and expanded kingdom influence.

Many people claim to be Christians, but there is a difference between being a fan of Jesus than being a follower of Jesus.

Our spiritual maturity can define what side of the fence we are on. To be a follower of Jesus is to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow him. "Then He called the crowd to Him along with His disciples and said: Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me." (Mark 8:34)

We must understand that even though God meets us in our mess and accepts us as we are, He does not want us to stay that way. We must move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be

taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and faith in God. (Hebrews 6:1)

God's plan is for us to move beyond the elementary teaching and to grow more in the image of Jesus Christ. Spiritual maturity is for all our characteristics to be more like Jesus in every way.

Indications Of Spiritual Maturity

We have the human pattern of spiritual maturity in Jesus Christ. To the extent that our lives come to resemble His; to the extent that our kinship with Him becomes more conspicuous, to that extent, we are spiritually mature.

Though that is clearly the right answer, it is hardly that simple. What complicates our looking to Jesus as the model of spiritual maturity is the thick overlay of distorted images and teachings about Jesus that cloak his humanity from us.