

Personal Retreat: A Renewed Heart

Myungjin Shin

CD 735 Spiritual Leadership

February 21st, 2023

Preparation to Meet with God

Coming into this semester, I was mentally and emotionally exhausted from the tremendous amount of things I had to do for work. Consequently, I was considering taking only one class this upcoming semester. Yet, knowing that I had to attend school as a full-time student to be eligible for the scholarship I received, I decided to do so accordingly. Thus, I have been living a hectic life, balancing work, school, and ministry. Being in such a busy place, I could not put much effort into caring for my spiritual life. I was growing distant from God. But I had no motivation to do anything.

I asked God to do something about it. I wanted Him to renew my heart. Yet, ironically, I was not willing to do any work for that. Perhaps, I was unconsciously expecting God to do something supernatural so that I may be filled with His love. However, one Sunday, he showed me an image of a very dried, grey heart and revealed that such was the condition of my heart. He wanted me to water the heart by soaking myself in his presence. He wanted me to seek his presence and promised He would then renew my heart. Sadly, I did not want to do the work, so I did not respond to his invitation. Hence, my heart hardened, and whenever I prayed, I felt like something was blocking God and me.

Meeting with God

I had very mixed emotions about this assignment. Part of me did not want to do it because I knew it required 'work.' The other part of me was excited because it is a needed time and process. Yet, knowing I had to do this for this class, I brought myself to be with God. Thus, I read Rob Reimer's principles of God-initiated conversation and followed them one by one.

Worship helped posture my heart to begin expressing my love for Him. Initially, I did not want to worship because I did not feel like singing. So I first listened. I listened to song after

song until I came across a song entitled *Pour My Love On You*— a song I sang the day I was delivered from demons through Power Encounter. It reminded me of the freedom I experienced and the grateful, loving heart I had in response. Naturally, I found myself singing the song to give Him thanks. I continued worshipping as I remembered what He did on that day, which naturally brought back moment of when He had been faithful and loving. Continually, I sang and worshipped. I soon found myself with open arms praising God as I poured my heart.

Soon, the image of the dry heart popped up in my head. At that moment, I remembered Rob's words on the importance of making confessions current. I knew there were unconfessed sins, and I did not want any demons to take ground in my heart. So I began confessing all sins that I could recall. As I confessed, layers of hardness were peeling away, and I could sense my heart softening. But I knew there were more sins that I had to confess. So I asked God to reveal all the sins I was unaware of. Interestingly, God reminded me of the sins I committed when I was young. As I confessed those sins, another image popped up in my head. I saw the hardened outer exterior of my grey heart slowly peeling off, and I saw my heart shining. Not all layers were peeled, but I soon realized that it was because there was more work for me to do. Yet, having this powerful image of my heart transforming brought me to worship God again.

Knowing I had also put in the effort, I transitioned to reading the Scripture. I continued from where I had stopped a while ago— Matthew 4:12-25. In this chapter, Jesus preaches the Kingdom gospel and heals people. I recognized that everyone who were brought to Jesus experience healing or restoration without exception. Such observation made me recognize that perhaps I have been feeling so unmotivated and even defeated because I never brought myself at Jesus' feet. So I declared to God that I was presenting myself at his feet, all stripped and naked. I asked Him to breathe in me His life so that my dry, dead heart could be renewed. I prayed for

His Kingdom's power to empower and overwhelm me so that I may have life and carry his presence. I surrendered and asked God to ignite my heart so that I may relentlessly pursue after His presence and for greater intimacy.

Moving Onward

That day, God touched my heart. Albeit not having experienced an overwhelming emotion, He softly demonstrated his amazing grace and love. I felt his power being manifested, which overwhelmed the hardness, weariness, and exhaustion I had been experiencing. I had a renewed heart and refreshed gratefulness for Him, and I was in a posture of thanking him repeatedly for everything He had done. My heart was strengthened, and I felt ready to run this race with Him again. The external circumstances have not changed, but I had much love, hope and excitement to follow God, and to bring Him glory and honor through everything that I do in life— assignments for school, work, or even serving at church.

Experiencing such transformation, I realized how important it is to retreat regularly and spend time with God. Offering an entire day (or more) allows one to create space to experience a different depth of intimacy and to be keenly aware to God's voice, unlike in quiet times. Therefore, I need to give God my full attention and constantly dwell in His presence. I need to be His best friend, as he desires, so that I may understand His heart, thoughts, and perspective, which would strengthen me to love and bless others. To give God such space to speak and for me to love Him, I commit to having personal retreat at least once a month— the second Monday of each month. I will make it a non-negotiable day because I know that is one of the only time when I can refresh my spirit and renew my soul. There will be hardship in following through with the commitment with temptations to do other things and my busy schedule. Yet, I know this is crucial for my walk with God, so I will have my soulmate keep me accountable.