

First Question:

So the first disclaimer is that I am not a person of wisdom yet. I hope someday I will be. I hope I am moving in the right direction.

The second disclaimer is that my computer would not let me number the answers without some crazy formatting that indented half the page. I could not defeat it.

I really don't know how to answer this question. I am trying to answer this honestly because I want to be successful in answering the question, but my ideas seem very small. I guess I have two things that are recent. One started in March. I have never used my phone for devotional study, but because there were not enough books in the ALCC book shop of our Lenten devotional (Fast from Wrong Thinking by Gregory Dickow, which I highly recommend) I had to begin the devotional on my phone. Well then came March 13th and I couldn't get to the ALCC book shop, nor any other book shop, nor any other shop. So I ordered the book online because I usually do better with paper rather than digital copies. Never mind that by May I was reading books on my phone because I couldn't get to a library! ANYWAY, I continued using the devotional on the phone and discovered there are lots of other ones on there too. So I now read 3 different ones a day. It sounds like a lot, but really it is not. I know other people do a lot longer time than it takes me. I have found some I really like, like Beginnings. Each segment is 88 days long (causing me to wonder if 88 is a significant Biblical number) and it goes deep into Genesis. For example 5 days on Lot and all the scripture of his story in Genesis can teach us. It is awesome!!! I also have been recently (especially since September) picking ones on anxiety some of which have been helpful and others not as much. Anyway I hope that by adding this into my daily life I will grow in the ways of God and decrease in the ways of the world.

Also I am taking another class this semester: Praying in Tongues. I have had and use this gift since my water baptism at ALCC. I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the same day. And I love it!!! But the class homework is to increase the amount of time we spend praying in tongues. I think this is a good thing.

I don't know what God is accomplishing in all this. I am not seeing a whole lot of fruit, but I am thinking perhaps I am in the "seed" stage with everything right now and that the harvest will come. I know not to give up.

Second Question:

Yes.

I am assuming that you would like more than a one word answer. There are many patterns of thought that I have fought to overcome in the past 7 years. It has been a hard battle and I still don't have the full victory. The COVID crisis has not helped at all! Behaviors are less of a problem but there are a couple that I am working on. All of the above is foolish and unwise, obviously, or it wouldn't need to be changed for me to move forward and into a more abundant life. The healing restorative grace of God is amazing. I need more. But I already have received a lot. (I know this is cryptic, you have kind of hit a huge nerve with this question!)

Third Question:

The area of my life that I know that I must do better is TRUST GOD. Sometimes I think I will die before I learn to really trust Him. It is so frustrating!! I want to, but I "can't". Sometimes I think I am trusting but what comes out later is that I was trusting in something else, not God. Trusting God goes against decades of thoughts that I was fed from early childhood and then just kept gnawing on through adulthood. It is so hard. But something I like about Psalms and other scripture is how often it comes up. Trust in the LORD. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Nothing can snatch me from His hand. Cast your cares on Him. The Lord is my shepard I shall not want. I have a mind full of scriptures about trusting, but there is a heart problem still. I figure if I just keep on reading and studying and getting help learning eventually the stronghold will crumble and I will be able to trust God, which will definitely reduce anxiety and stress and provide so many other benefits. I have learned to love Him and that wasn't easy either. But I did it. So now we are working on trust and trusting (ha ha ha) that He will guide the work and the worker (ME!!).

Papa,

Thank you. Thank you for my class that pushes and stretches me. Thank you for Prof. Cox, for bringing her to the Institute to teach and guide us. Thank you for my church and for Pastor John. Thank you for the other people in the class who are sharing ideas and thoughts so we can walk toward you together.

Your word in the Psalms is teaching us that we need to listen to your teaching too, and let it guide our lives. Because our shalom depends on torah. Help me to remember this torah is not the torah, the law and to not slip back into legalism. Help me to always live in your supply of grace.

Papa, I want to trust you more. I know I keep asking. And I know that you keep every promise forever because Pastor Josh taught us that. But I am lost in the forest of trust without being able to find you. I know what NOT to trust in and know that your forgive me when I forget and trust in the wrong things.

So this is funny Papa, I trust that you will teach me to trust you. Because I cannot see how it is going to happen any other way.

In Jesus' name!

AMEN!!

I am enjoying this class, Prof Cox, and thank you for coming again to teach us. But I am also finding this class really hard because of the personal nature of the questions you are asking. I am trying and hope that what I've done is good enough. I know it is not great, for sure. If there's anything I need to do differently for the second half please let me know.

Thanks!! ☺